THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

NIRDLINGER

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THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

"They have given you to me!"

THE WORLD
AND
HIS WIFE

By

CHARLES FREDERIC NIRDLINGER

After the verse of

JOSE ECHEGARAY'S

EL GRAN GALEOTO

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
2 East 29th Street

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1908

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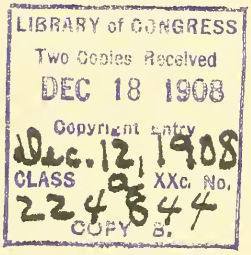

THE WORLD AND HIS WIFE

As presented at Daly's Theatre, New York,

November 2nd, 1908

by Mr. William Faversham and his Company

Cast of Characters

Don Julian.....Mr. H. Cooper Cliffe

Donna Teodora, his wife.....Miss Julie Opp

Don Severo.....Mr. Charles Harbury

Donna Mercedes, his wife.....Miss Olive Oliver

Don Pepito, their son.....Mr. Harry Redding

Captain Beaulieu, of the British Embassy,
Mr. Morton Selten

Don Ernesto.....Mr. Faversham

Genaro, concierge.....Mr. Lionel Belmore

Synopsis of Scenes

Act 1.—Drawing-room in Don Julian's home in Madrid. Evening.

Act II.—Two weeks later. Don Ernesto's rooms in the Alvarado Studio.

Act III.—Evening of the same day. Scene same as Act I.

Time—Present.

The World and His Wife

ACT I

THE SCENE *is the drawing-room in the house of* DON JULIAN: *spacious and sumptuously furnished. The walls are hung with velvet of old-rose; the coverings of chairs and couches are of corresponding tints. The beamed ceiling is of painted cedar. At the back, right, in a large arch, with French windows the full height of the room, opens a wide balcony; at the left, a similar arch leads to a stone hall-way, conducting to* JULIAN'S *apartment. A door at the left of the stage, flanked by tall, many-candled torchères, opens into the entrance hall of the house; a door at the right of the stage leads to the library. Between the arches, at the back, is a grand-piano, and a single torchère of massive design. Below the library door is a mantel of pale-pink marble, with grilled fire-place and brazier of Moorish copper. On the mantel are two antique figures, supporting candelabra.*

When the curtain rises, TEODORA *stands at*

the balcony door; faintly from the street below, is heard the waltz of the opera "Galeoto," played by the mandolinata.

JULIAN, *entering*

[*At the door, calling.*

Teodora!

[*She does not answer.*

Teo!

TEODORA, *turns*

Oh, it's you, dear!

JULIAN

In the clouds again?

TEODORA

There aren't any. The sky's as clear as crystal. It's going to be a gorgeous evening.

JULIAN

I've asked my brother, Severo, to dinner—and Mercedes.

TEODORA

[*With a pout.*

Oh, did you?

JULIAN

Why, what's the matter?

TEODORA

Oh, nothing, nothing at all. Only—I was thinking we'd be all by ourselves this evening—just you and I—and Ernesto.

JULIAN

Well, I'll make some excuse—and call it off—

TEODORA

No, no, no—it was just a mood—I'm glad they're coming—and we'll dine on the balcony.

[*Rings for* SERVANT.

JULIAN

Isn't it too cool?

TEODORA

Oh, no—it'll be lovely.

TEODORA

[*To* SERVANT *who enters.*

We'll have dinner on the balcony.

SERVANT

Yes, Madame—the usual hour, Madame?

TEODORA

No, earlier—half an hour—we're going to the opera.

SERVANT

Yes, Madame.

[*Goes out.*

TEODORA

The moon ought to be up, at the latest, with the coffee—and there's sure to be a street-band to play for us.—Julian, there's much we'll miss when we leave Madrid.

JULIAN

My dear, other countries have a moon and street-bands.

TEODORA

[*With a regretful toss of the head.*

Not like those of Madrid.

JULIAN

Well, we may not have to give them up.

TEODORA, *surprised*

Why, you've changed your plans?

JULIAN

Not so much I, as the Foreign Office.

TEODORA

Really?—What's happened?

JULIAN

For some reason, there's a sudden curious hesitancy over my appointment.

TEODORA

Politics, of course?

JULIAN

To tell the truth, I can't make out what it is. Severo has gone to the Minister, to see if *he* can get at the bottom of the mystery.

TEODORA

But it was quite settled, I thought.

JULIAN

So did I. In fact, I never thought of possible rivalry. It's a very costly Embassy, the one they offered me—urged on me. The war with America left us all so poor—there aren't many who'd care to take it.—Why, when I lunched at the Palace, a few days ago, the King asked when I'd find it convenient to start—And the Queen said no end of nice things about you—with your beauty, charm and tact, the Embassy was sure to succeed—And now *this!* I really don't mind so much about myself, but won't Ernesto be disappointed!

TEODORA

You *asked* he be made First Secretary?

JULIAN

Not only *asked*—stipulated—

TEODORA

And they—agreed—?

JULIAN

Yes! A little dissent at first,—his youth and lack of diplomatic training—but I reminded the Minister the Government owed something to the

son of Don Florio, whose devotion to Spain cost him his fortune. . . . Had he made cause with her foes he would not only have saved his vast investments in Cuba, but increased them tenfold.—The least they can do in recompense is to start Ernesto on a diplomatic career.

TEODORA

You think he has the qualities?

JULIAN

Why not? Good-looking?

TEODORA

Rather.

JULIAN

Talks well?

TEODORA

Rather.

JULIAN

And not too much?

TEODORA

Too little, rather.

JULIAN

And dances?

TEODORA

Divinely!

JULIAN

There! Bismarck began with less than that. The one thing Ernesto lacks—

TEODORA

Fortune?

JULIAN

That, thank Heaven, *we* can supply.

TEODORA, *dubiously*

That's the stumbling block, I'm afraid.

JULIAN

Why?

TEODORA

Such help—he'll refuse.

JULIAN

Has he said so?

TEODORA

Oh, no—we've never spoken of it—but—you'll find I'm right, Julian.

JULIAN

But I won't hear of such—pride.

[*Pushes the bell-button.*

Is he in?

TEODORA

[*Showing the book.*

He—er—sent me this volume of Dante just before you came.

JULIAN

[*To* SERVANT *who enters.*

Say to Don Ernesto I wish to see him here.

[SERVANT *goes out.*

He has no right to deny me the chance to repay, in some small part, what I owe his father. At more than one crisis of my affairs Don Florio helped me to safety. But for him—I should have nothing—least of all you, Teodora. Isn't that enough to make me grateful?—Whatever I might do for the lad, I should never feel free of the debt.

TEODORA

Julian, aren't you a bit fantastic about it? You've been kindness itself to Ernesto. Rushed off to Barcelona the instant you learned he was alone. Brought him here, to be with us until his sorrow had softened. Watched over him, humoured his moods, won him gradually—and with such loving care!—from his sombre thoughts. Why—if he were your *brother*—

JULIAN

I've tried to, as if he were my *son*.

TEODORA, *lightly*

No, no—'brother' will do—quite well enough.

[ERNESTO *appears at the door.*

Here he is.

JULIAN

Hello, Ernesto.

ERNESTO, *bowing*

Julian—and Teodora—you got the book?

TEODORA

[*Holding it up.*

Thanks.

"The usual, and universal, three."

ERNESTO

Any news, Julian?

JULIAN

Nothing certain. We're waiting for Severo—If our plans fell through—would you mind very much?

ERNESTO

On *your* account, yes. On my own, not at all.

JULIAN

Why,—

ERNESTO

For one thing, I'm too poor for the post.

JULIAN

Legation secretary? Nonsense! Nothing's expected of you. You don't ask people to dinners and dances—

ERNESTO

No, but other people ask me to *theirs*—and gloves and cravats cost something—and cabs don't grow on trees.

JULIAN, *impatiently*

That phase of the matter I *will* not discuss.

ERNESTO

But I *must*, Julian. It's about that I want to speak with you—

[TEODORA *moves as if to go to the door.*

And you, too, Donna Teodora—Now you mustn't think me boorish or ungrateful, but it's high time I cut loose from this secure and comfortable haven and set out to see what I can do for myself.

JULIAN

Nonsense!

ERNESTO

[*Appealing to* TEODORA.

Am I not right, Teodora?

TEODORA

No! You must come with us!—And we'll marry you to one of those nice, tall American girls—like we saw at Ostend—who get railroads for dowries, and coal-mines for pin-money.

ERNESTO

Alluring—but I've quite decided!

TEODORA, *deprecatingly*

Of course—if you're unhappy here—

ERNESTO

It's just because I've been so wonderfully happy that I've begun to be—unhappy.

JULIAN

If you'd only look at matters sensibly and realize that whatever I may do for you—

ERNESTO, *interrupting*

Oh, yes, I know you were loyal friends—but, my dear Julian, I can't accede further to your chivalrous, almost quixotic, memory of a favour long since passed. The companionship of all these months has more than repaid it. Without it I don't know what would have become of me. My father and I were great chums, you know, and I didn't think anything could ever begin to take his place in life, as you have. But now, I beg of you, offer me nothing more that I *must* refuse.

JULIAN

[*As if hurt.*

Oh, of course, if my poor services humiliate you—or embarrass you—

ERNESTO

'Humiliate,' no—'embarrass,' yes. Of course, you'll say it doesn't amount to anything—that I should take no notice—and at first I didn't. But when people saw me constantly with you—in your box at the opera—using your traps and horses—a wing of the palace set apart for me—your servants at my beck and call—credit at your bankers'—why, I can't tell you how often I've been asked: 'You are Donna Teodora's brother?' No.—'Ah, cousin, then?' No. 'Oh, Don Julian's nephew?' Again, no. 'But, *of course*, a near relation?' No—no relation at all—just a friend, an old friend. 'Ho—Ho—well, you're a very lucky young man.'—And up went the eyebrows!

[*Laughing.*

Now, can't you see that that might become annoying after a while?

[*After waiting for some response.*

Teo, you must understand?

TEODORA

Why, yes, I—

JULIAN

Well, *I don't*—

TEODORA

But, Julian, you don't have to answer the questions—

JULIAN

Don't I, though! Every day. A little different in form, perhaps. 'That's an attractive young fellow you've stopping with you.' Yes, we like him. 'Going to put him into the bank, I suppose?' No, has no taste for business. 'Politics?' We're trying to induce him. 'And if you can't?' He has some talent for letters. 'Ah, artist?—that's too bad!—Any fortune?' *Yes, just as much as I have.*

ERNESTO, *interrupting*

But, Julian—

JULIAN

Why not? It's the truth. Your father was ready

to share with me everything he had—and so am I with you. It is not a *favour* I offer—but only what I believe is due to you.

ERNESTO

But Julian, such generous spirit—the world doesn't understand.

JULIAN

[*Snapping his fingers.*

That for the world!—If I disregard what I deem an obligation, what does the world give me for my lost peace of mind? After all, you see, I am selfish! When you're as old as I am—the prattle and tattle of the world—

[*Starts to go.*

Teodora will tell you what I think of it—

[To TEODORA.

When Severo comes—I'm in the library—

[*To* ERNESTO.

The world, indeed!

[*Laughing.*

You're young yet, Ernesto, very young!

[*He goes out.*

ERNESTO

[*Looking after* JULIAN.

Just the finest fellow—isn't he?

TEODORA

I think so—that's why I married him.

ERNESTO

Couldn't be kinder to me, if I were his son.

TEODORA

[*With a stamp of her foot.*

Brother, if you please—Brother!

ERNESTO, *laughing*

Of course, if you prefer, but it means the same.

TEODORA

No, it doesn't—not by a good many years.—
You're going to the opera with us?

ERNESTO

Is there a place?

TEODORA

Surely—So when the story gets lost in the maze of the music, you can set us right—You must know it by heart!

ERNESTO

[*Pointing to the book which* TEODORA *holds.*

Yes—as it's told there—in the 'Inferno,' —I read it very often.

TEODORA

[*Looking at the pages.*

Yes—this page shows—thumb-marked—and notes everywhere—in the margin. Here you've written—

[*Peers at the page.*

'Poor Francesca!' 'Poor Paolo!' —And here—

ERNESTO

[*Reaching to take the book.*

Don't, Teodora—you'll hurt your eyes.

TEODORA

[*Retaining the book.*

No, I want to see the rest—

[*Starts toward the balcony.*

ERNESTO

Some other time—it's getting dark.

TEODORA

[*At the balcony-window.*

Light enough *here*—by the window.

TEODORA, *reading*

'Blameless—both'—what does that mean?

ERNESTO

I forget now—idle, vagrant thoughts—scrawled, as I read.

[*Turns to take the book.*

TEODORA

[*Drawing it away.*

But why '*Poor* Paolo'—'*Poor* Francesca'? *You pity* them?

ERNESTO

And don't you?

TEODORA

No—I—yes—*pity*, perhaps. But '*blameless*'—*No!*

ERNESTO

They loved—greatly—'*God-like*,' is Dante's word.

TEODORA

And 'God-like' they should have kept it—up there with the stars!—And not drag it down to earth—forgetting—disdaining—faith—loyalty—gratitude—pride—*That* was not 'God-like!'

ERNESTO

You are right, Teodora—but, now and then, Fate leads two weak humans, face to face, and says: 'You twain are mates'—'You belong together, body and soul'—And when that happens—as with Francesca and Paolo—faith—loyalty, pride are vain words. Love doesn't heed them, nor hear them. When that happens—not only in poet's fancy, but the hum-drum of every-day life—the maid, nobly bred, guarded like a priceless pearl, runs away with the picador;—a Princess of the line, takes up with her street-fiddler;—the queen leaves her throne for her ballad-monger—

[SEVERO *enters in time to hear the last part of the speech: he is not seen by* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO.

TEODORA

And they are '*blameless*'?

ERNESTO

Yes—because—*helpless.*

[*It has been gradually growing darker: the light of the setting sun now scarcely reaches beyond the point where* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *stand.*

MERCEDES, *entering*

Nobody here?

[TEODORA *and* ERNESTO, *absorbed in each other, do not hear.*

SEVERO

Wait—I'll ring for lights.

[*He pushes the bell-button.*

MERCEDES

[*Catching sight of the others.*

But there is—

[*Starts toward the balcony.*

SEVERO

[*Stopping her.*

No—don't disturb them.

MERCEDES, *sneeringly*

Together—as usual.

SEVERO

And yet you wonder people talk—call it an outrage.

[*Calls in a sharp tone.*

Julian!

[ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *turn quickly.*

TEODORA

[*Coming from the balcony.*

Oh, Mercedes!

[*Kisses her.*

ERNESTO, *advancing*

It's I, Don Severo.

SEVERO, *significantly*

So I see—I thought, *of course*, it was Julian.

MERCEDES, *suspiciously*

What were you two doing—in the dark?

TEODORA

[*With book in hand.*

Reading.

MERCEDES

By *this* light?—We could hardly find our way in.

TEODORA

Oh, I forgot—

[*Goes toward bell.*

SEVERO

I've rung.—Julian's out, *of course?*

TEODORA

No—in the library—he's expecting you.

SEVERO

[*With intention.*

Yes—I have news for him.

MERCEDES

Take Don Ernesto—it may interest him.

ERNESTO

Julian will tell me—if he thinks I ought to know.

MERCEDES

[*To* ERNESTO.

Has Don Julian arranged for the opera-box to-night?

TEODORA

He asked Pepito to look after it.

MERCEDES

[*To* ERNESTO.

Won't you please make sure—Pepito's so careless, you know.

[*To* TEODORA.

I want to talk with you.

TEODORA

Talk ahead.

MERCEDES

Alone, please. Get rid of him!

TEODORA

[*In a tone of surprise.*

'Get rid of—'

MERCEDES

If you don't, I shall—

TEODORA, *protesting*

Why, my dear—

[*Turns to* ERNESTO.

Ernesto, Donna Mercedes has something to tell me.

ERNESTO

[*Starting to go.*

Oh, I beg—

TEODORA

—and asked me to 'get rid of' you—

MERCEDES, *embarrassed*

But, Teo—

TEODORA

The *truth*, dear—it's so much simpler!

ERNESTO

[*Stopping at the door, and turning.*

Oh, Teodora, I've asked Captain Beaulieu to come to dinner. Do you mind?

TEODORA

No, glad to have him. Julian likes him. Dinner at seven.

[ERNESTO *goes out.*

[*To* MERCEDES.

Captain Beaulieu is military *attaché* at the British Legation.

MERCEDES

Yes, I've met him—And Ernesto—

[*Nods.*

asks people to dinner?—

[TEODORA *nods 'yes.'*

Quite master-of-the-house, isn't he?

TEODORA

Why, of course. That's the way we want him to feel. His father and Julian—you know what friends they were.—Julian never tires talking of it.—Ernesto's as much at home here as Julian himself.

MERCEDES, *snappishly*

Yes, *that's what they say.*

TEODORA

Good! Everything we have is at Ernesto's disposal, and we want the whole world to know it.

MERCEDES

Teo, you're either very ingenuous or very ingenious.

TEODORA

Sounds interesting—I wish I knew what it meant.

[MERCEDES *looks at* TEODORA; *there is a troubled pause.*

TEODORA

Well, well—what is it? You look serious.

MERCEDES

It *is* serious.

TEODORA

Aha, you've been up to some mischief?

MERCEDES

No, but—my dear, you know I like you, don't you?—that I'm your friend?

TEODORA

Yes—but you didn't send Ernesto away to tell me *that!*—Now what's happened?

MERCEDES

I *hope* nothing has happened, I *pray* nothing will.

TEODORA, *impatiently*

Don't keep me on the rack. What can happen—and to whom?

MERCEDES

To all three.

TEODORA

What three?

MERCEDES

The usual, and universal, three—the wife, the husband—and—another man.

TEODORA, *perplexedly*

Another—?

MERCEDES

The other man—

[*With a nod to indicate* ERNESTO.

TEODORA

Ernesto?

MERCEDES

[*With elaborate relief.*

Thank you for guessing!

TEODORA, *laughing*

Wasn't very hard with that—

[*Repeats* MERCEDES' *nod.*

[*With sudden change of tone.*

And *you're* in love with Ernesto?

MERCEDES

[*Looking at her closely.*

If I didn't know you to be a candid, straightforward woman, I'd say you were *fencing*—or worse!

TEODORA, *rising*

And I'd say you were—

MERCEDES

Teodora—is it *possible* you don't know what they are saying?

TEODORA

Who are 'they'?

MERCEDES

Everybody—everybody—in our world—and half Madrid, besides.

TEODORA

[*After a pause.*

And what do they say?

MERCEDES

That you are making a fool of Julian—you and Ernesto!

TEODORA, *aghast*

Mercedes!

MERCEDES, *deliberately*

That's what they say, Teo.

TEODORA, *rising*

Ernesto and I—they say—!

[*After a pause.*

Well—now the shock's over—it's so ridiculous—what they say—so supremely and sublimely wicked—that it's ridiculous—

MERCEDES

Then you care *nothing* for this man?

TEODORA

I like Ernesto—*like* him—better, I believe, than any man I know—

MERCEDES

Ah!

TEODORA

But I *love* Julian.

MERCEDES

Is there so much difference?

TEODORA, *impatiently*

Is there!—Well—if you don't know the difference, I'm sorry for you—

[*As an after-thought.*

And your husband, too.

[*In a different tone.*

I'd lay down my life for Julian, and you know it.

MERCEDES

I believe you—but out there—

[*Indicating the world without.*

They don't—They're *laughing* at Julian.

TEODORA

Laughing at him! I'd hate to be the one he catches at it!

MERCEDES

[*With a gesture.*

He has only to reach out his hand—anywhere—

at his club—in the Prado—at the opera—And as for *you*, Teo—

TEODORA

Never mind me! That's no matter!—what they say!—A woman reckons only with God and her own conscience. But Julian—that pink of chivalry, with the pride of El Campeador!—Mercedes, it would kill him—*kill* him!

MERCEDES

Yes, and knowing that, Teo, feeling as you do, how could you be so—so—

TEODORA

What!

MERCEDES

Reckless—or indifferent—of what everyone thinks.

TEODORA

No, they *can't*—

MERCEDES

Says then—comes to the same—and more!—It isn't what you *do*, nor what people *think* you do; it's what they *say* you do!

TEODORA

But no *right*—or reason—

MERCEDES

Oh, plenty of reason—this man constantly about you.

TEODORA

With *Julian!*

MERCEDES

No, *not* always—Just now—when we came in—and found you —*bien-intime*—'reading'—in the dusk—Julian wasn't with you—

TEODORA

But—here—in my *home*—

MERCEDES

And the servants?

TEODORA

The servants!

MERCEDES

Have eyes and ears just the same as the others.

TEODORA

And can see and hear no more than the others.
[*Nods to indicate the world outside.*
Oh, but, come, Mercedes—this is too much! The servants! I begin to believe you mean to humiliate me.

MERCEDES

No, but neither shall *he*—if we can help it—we who really care for you. Teodora, the fellow's unworthy of you—not fit to tie your—

[*Points to* TEODORA'S *shoes.*

TEODORA

[*Turning sharply.*

Mercedes, I forbid you!

MERCEDES, *triumphantly*

There, you see!—you flare at the first word against him.

TEODORA

Yes, a guest under our roof—Julian's closest friend—as dear to him almost as Severo—living with us in the frankest companionship—you expect me to listen—in patience—to the chatter

of the servants' hall—the scandal of the streets.

MERCEDES

It is more than that—much more! This *preux-chevalier* whom you defend with such fire has compromised Julian ruinously.

TEODORA

Nonsense!

MERCEDES

Indeed! You know, perhaps, Julian's appointment has been held up?

TEODORA

Yes, he told me.

MERCEDES

And the reason?

TEODORA

He doesn't know—

MERCEDES

But *Severo* does—learned it just now at the Foreign Office. The gossip you make so light of—that you ridicule and despise—well, *there* they take it more seriously. You understand?

TEODORA

I begin to.

MERCEDES

At first they would tell Severo nothing—the usual diplomatic excuses and evasions. "A mere delay"—they put it. When Severo insisted—there were intimations, none too nice—shoulder shrugs—lifted eyebrows;—and then an attempt to make a *joke* of it all!

TEODORA

I can imagine that was enough for Severo!

MERCEDES

Yes.—He demanded that they come out into the open and tell him exactly what this treatment of his brother meant.—He demanded the truth—and he got it!

TEODORA, *contemptuously*

The truth?

MERCEDES

Well, what they believe the truth. And in plain, blunt terms, without disguise or delicacy.—Is that enough, Teo?

TEODORA

No, go on.

MERCEDES

Well, the Capital to which Julian would be accredited, they explained, prides itself on its prim and precise social orders. None of our European ways!—The ménage-à-trois, with its attendant gossip and eventual divorce, is quite unknown.—In short, their social code, over there is summed up in the Seventh Commandment—Or so they tried to make Severo believe. They told of an Ambassador, from a Power much greater than Spain, practically given his *congé* because of some vague doubt regarding a member of his household. The Ambassador showed his Emperor's decree that proclaimed his protegée princess by title and heiress to all his estates. But even that didn't satisfy his straight-laced censors; and *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur* had himself transferred.—Now do you understand?

TEODORA, *bitterly*

Quite well enough!

MERCEDES

Why did Julian insist on Ernesto's appointment —and why did you let him? Without that

everything would have gone well.—They told Severo relations with the other country were still awkward and the Government could not risk a *contretemps.*—If here in Madrid, where we are not squeamish, this *ménage* is misunderstood—what chance to escape scandal over there?

TEODORA

If Julian should know!

MERCEDES

He must know.—Severo's come to tell him.

TEODORA, *protesting*

But, first, let *me* see Julian. It is my right——

MERCEDES

His brother has the greater right.

[JULIAN *and* SEVERO *enter, talking vehemently.*

TEODORA

[*Rushing to* JULIAN.

Julian!

JULIAN

[*Indicating* MERCEDES.

What has she been telling you?

MERCEDES

Just what Severo has been telling *you.*

JULIAN

Now, my good people, for this once I let it go, but you shall not—

SEVERO

We only tell you what they say—

JULIAN

They say—*they* say—who?

MERCEDES

Everyone—everywhere—all the world and his wife!—

JULIAN

They shall answer to us.

SEVERO

You can't fight all the world!

JULIAN

For Teodora, yes—all the world.

MERCEDES

Perhaps—but you can't fight his wife.—I've spoken to Teo only as I would to a loved sister whom I saw in danger.

JULIAN

If there *were* danger, I should be the first—

SEVERO

No, the *last* to see. It is always so! Shut your own eyes if you will, but you can't shut out the picture, here, for all the world to look at; the wife, young, beautiful, with a mind for moonlight and the mandolinata, and an idling, dreaming youth, who when he isn't lolling at her feet is mooning over love stories—or writing verses—for Teodora to read! A fine animal to let loose about the house while you're at your desk muddling over State affairs—I'd as lief bring into *my* house the pet of the bull-ring!

JULIAN, *indignantly*

Severo, you forget the presence of my wife—

SEVERO

No—nor that she bears our name—that her honour is our own.—Let him not forget it either—this fellow Ernesto!

[ERNESTO *appears at the door in time to hear this: he is followed by* PEPITO.

ERNESTO

[*As if to withdraw.*

I beg your pardon.

JULIAN

Come in—

PEPITO

[*To* TEODORA.

Here are the tickets—the opera is 'Galeoto'—with a ballet, from Paris. Trala!

TEODORA

Thanks, Pepito.

ERNESTO

[*To* JULIAN.

What's happened?

TEODORA

Why, of course. That's the way we want him to feel. His father and Julian—you know what friends they were.—Julian never tires talking of it.—Ernesto's as much at home here as Julian himself.

MERCEDES, *snappishly*

Yes, *that's what they say.*

TEODORA

Good! Everything we have is at Ernesto's disposal, and we want the whole world to know it.

MERCEDES

Teo, you're either very ingenuous or very ingenious.

TEODORA

Sounds interesting—I wish I knew what it meant.

[MERCEDES *looks at* TEODORA; *there is a troubled pause.*

TEODORA

Well, well—what is it? You look serious.

MERCEDES

It *is* serious.

TEODORA

Aha, you've been up to some mischief?

MERCEDES

No, but—my dear, you know I like you, don't you?—that I'm your friend?

TEODORA

Yes—but you didn't send Ernesto away to tell me *that!*—Now what's happened?

MERCEDES

I *hope* nothing has happened, I *pray* nothing will.

TEODORA, *impatiently*

Don't keep me on the rack. What can happen—and to whom?

MERCEDES

To all three.

TEODORA

What three?

MERCEDES

The usual, and universal, three—the wife, the husband—and—another man.

TEODORA, *perplexedly*

Another—?

MERCEDES

The other man—

[*With a nod to indicate* ERNESTO.

TEODORA

Ernesto?

MERCEDES

[*With elaborate relief.*

Thank you for guessing!

TEODORA, *laughing*

Wasn't very hard with that—

[*Repeats* MERCEDES' *nod.*

[*With sudden change of tone.*

And *you're* in love with Ernesto?

MERCEDES

[*Looking at her closely.*

If I didn't know you to be a candid, straightforward woman, I'd say you were *fencing*—or worse!

TEODORA, *rising*

And I'd say you were—

MERCEDES

Teodora—is it *possible* you don't know what they are saying?

TEODORA

Who are 'they'?

MERCEDES

Everybody—everybody—in our world—and half Madrid, besides.

TEODORA

[*After a pause.*

And what do they say?

MERCEDES

That you are making a fool of Julian—you and Ernesto!

TEODORA, *aghast*

Mercedes!

MERCEDES, *deliberately*

That's what they say, Teo.

TEODORA, *rising*

Ernesto and I—they say—!

[*After a pause.*

Well—now the shock's over—it's so ridiculous—what they say—so supremely and sublimely wicked—that it's ridiculous—

MERCEDES

Then you care *nothing* for this man?

TEODORA

I like Ernesto—*like* him—better, I believe, than any man I know—

MERCEDES

Ah!

TEODORA

But I *love* Julian.

MERCEDES

Is there so much difference?

TEODORA, *impatiently*

Is there!—Well—if you don't know the difference, I'm sorry for you—

[*As an after-thought.*

And your husband, too.

[*In a different tone.*

I'd lay down my life for Julian, and you know it.

MERCEDES

I believe you—but out there—

[*Indicating the world without.*

They don't—They're *laughing* at Julian.

TEODORA

Laughing at him! I'd hate to be the one he catches at it!

MERCEDES

[*With a gesture.*

He has only to reach out his hand—anywhere—

at his club—in the Prado—at the opera—And as for *you*, Teo—

TEODORA

Never mind me! That's no matter!—what they say!—A woman reckons only with God and her own conscience. But Julian—that pink of chivalry, with the pride of El Campeador!—Mercedes, it would kill him—*kill* him!

MERCEDES

Yes, and knowing that, Teo, feeling as you do, how could you be so—so—

TEODORA

What!

MERCEDES

Reckless—or indifferent—of what everyone thinks.

TEODORA

No, they *can't*—

MERCEDES

Says then—comes to the same—and more!—It isn't what you *do*, nor what people *think* you do; it's what they *say* you do!

TEODORA

But no *right*—or reason—

MERCEDES

Oh, plenty of reason—this man constantly about you.

TEODORA

With *Julian!*

MERCEDES

No, *not* always—Just now—when we came in—and found you —*bien-intime*—'reading'—in the dusk—Julian wasn't with you—

TEODORA

But—here—in my *home*—

MERCEDES

And the servants?

TEODORA

The servants!

MERCEDES

Have eyes and ears just the same as the others.

TEODORA

And can see and hear no more than the others.

[*Nods to indicate the world outside.*

Oh, but, come, Mercedes—this is too much! The servants! I begin to believe you mean to humiliate me.

MERCEDES

No, but neither shall *he*—if we can help it—we who really care for you. Teodora, the fellow's unworthy of you—not fit to tie your—

[*Points to* TEODORA'S *shoes.*

TEODORA

[*Turning sharply.*

Mercedes, I forbid you!

MERCEDES, *triumphantly*

There, you see!—you flare at the first word against him.

TEODORA

Yes, a guest under our roof—Julian's closest friend—as dear to him almost as Severo—living with us in the frankest companionship—you expect me to listen—in patience—to the chatter

of the servants' hall—the scandal of the streets.

MERCEDES

It is more than that—much more! This *preux-chevalier* whom you defend with such fire has compromised Julian ruinously.

TEODORA

Nonsense!

MERCEDES

Indeed! You know, perhaps, Julian's appointment has been held up?

TEODORA

Yes, he told me.

MERCEDES

And the reason?

TEODORA

He doesn't know—

MERCEDES

But *Severo* does—learned it just now at the Foreign Office. The gossip you make so light of—that you ridicule and despise—well, *there* they take it more seriously. You understand?

TEODORA

I begin to.

MERCEDES

At first they would tell Severo nothing—the usual diplomatic excuses and evasions. "A mere delay"—they put it. When Severo insisted—there were intimations, none too nice—shoulder shrugs—lifted eyebrows;—and then an attempt to make a *joke* of it all!

TEODORA

I can imagine that was enough for Severo!

MERCEDES

Yes.—He demanded that they come out into the open and tell him exactly what this treatment of his brother meant.—He demanded the truth—and he got it!

TEODORA, *contemptuously*

The truth?

MERCEDES

Well, what they believe the truth. And in plain, blunt terms, without disguise or delicacy.—Is that enough, Teo?

TEODORA

No, go on.

MERCEDES

Well, the Capital to which Julian would be accredited, they explained, prides itself on its prim and precise social orders. None of our European ways!—The ménage-à-trois, with its attendant gossip and eventual divorce, is quite unknown.—In short, their social code, over there is summed up in the Seventh Commandment—Or so they tried to make Severo believe. They told of an Ambassador, from a Power much greater than Spain, practically given his *congé* because of some vague doubt regarding a member of his household. The Ambassador showed his Emperor's decree that proclaimed his protegée princess by title and heiress to all his estates. But even that didn't satisfy his straight-laced censors; and *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur* had himself transferred.—Now do you understand?

TEODORA, *bitterly*

Quite well enough!

MERCEDES

Why did Julian insist on Ernesto's appointment—and why did you let him? Without that

everything would have gone well.—They told Severo relations with the other country were still awkward and the Government could not risk a *contretemps*.—If here in Madrid, where we are not squeamish, this *ménage* is misunderstood—what chance to escape scandal over there?

TEODORA

If Julian should know!

MERCEDES

He must know.—Severo's come to tell him.

TEODORA, *protesting*

But, first, let *me* see Julian. It is my right——

MERCEDES

His brother has the greater right.

[JULIAN *and* SEVERO *enter, talking vehemently.*

TEODORA

[*Rushing to* JULIAN.

Julian!

JULIAN

[*Indicating* MERCEDES.

What has she been telling you?

MERCEDES

Just what Severo has been telling *you.*

JULIAN

Now, my good people, for this once I let it go, but you shall not—

SEVERO

We only tell you what they say—

JULIAN

They say—*they* say—who?

MERCEDES

Everyone—everywhere—all the world and his wife!—

JULIAN

They shall answer to us.

SEVERO

You can't fight all the world!

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MERCEDES

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[*As if to withdraw.*

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TEODORA

Thanks, Pepito.

ERNESTO

[*To* JULIAN.

What's happened?

JULIAN, *evasively*

Why—why—why—what should happen?

ERNESTO

I don't know—but—I heard my name—and Teodora—she's been crying.

JULIAN

Women are given to that sort of thing, I believe.

ERNESTO

Not Teodora. What's wrong here?

TEODORA, *lightly*

Nothing—nothing to speak of.

ERNESTO

Anything *I* can set right?

JULIAN

[*As if to dismiss the subject.*

Whatever's wrong, *I* am here to set it right.—This is *her* affair and *mine.*

SEVERO, *significantly*

And if need be I'll make it mine!

ERNESTO

You make it *mine*, too—when you take that tone with me.—Come, Julian, you have never yet denied me your confidence—and I *demand* it now—since it is *plain* the affair directly concerns me.

JULIAN

Forgive me—I've been greatly disturbed.

SEVERO

[*To* ERNESTO.

It is the matter of his appointment.

ERNESTO

The delay?

SEVERO

There's more than delay—they threaten to withhold it entirely. *And because of you.*

ERNESTO

That trouble's easily gotten over. I never wished the post for which Julian urged me—all along intended to refuse it.

SEVERO

Then why didn't you?

ERNESTO

One doesn't decline a diplomatic post until it is *offered;* and I knew it would never come to that —I knew Don Alvarez' influence would prevent it.

SEVERO

He says your father ruined him—in prestige and fortune.

ERNESTO

Yes, he did. That's one of my proudest memories. Alvarez was of that precious crew of army contractors who sent our soldiers to Cuba and the Philippines with guns of tin instead of steel, with sand for powder, and stole their poor rations until they starved. My father brought him to book for it. Everyone knows that.

SEVERO

Yes—and if it were *only* Alvarez—

ERNESTO

Who else then?

SEVERO

A thousand others—half the town—every man and woman who has taken note of your position in this house. Surely, you have not been left in ignorance—

ERNESTO

Oh, no—

SEVERO

[*To* JULIAN.

You see?

[*To* ERNESTO.

Then, even to *you*—?

ERNESTO

Yes.

SEVERO

And you didn't strangle the wretch?

ERNESTO

I should have—only it was your son, Pepito.

SEVERO

Better he than another.

ERNESTO

[*In a threatening tone.*

Better, perhaps, for you.

SEVERO

What do you mean? What do you mean?—

[*Turns to* PEPITO.

Pepito, take your mother—

[*Motions them to leave.*

ERNESTO

Teodora, if you will—

TEODORA

[*As if asking* JULIAN'S *permission.*

No—I'd rather remain—may I not, Julian?

JULIAN

[*After a glance at* ERNESTO.

No—let it be as Ernesto wishes—

[*Takes* TEODORA *to the door, and comes back.*

Now we may as well have this out, once for all.

SEVERO

Now, Sir, you mean?—

ERNESTO

I mean, Don Severo—

[*At a glance from* TEODORA, *as she goes out, he softens his tones.*

I mean that what I heard from Pepito—some absurd, some petty—and all infamous—might better come from anyone else than one of Julian's kinsmen. If I did not thrust the lie down the throat of him who only *repeated* it—carelessly, I know—half in jest, and with no conscious evil—it was because he *was* Julian's kin. I could not be so patient a second time, even with Julian's kinsmen.—That's what I mean, Don Severo.

JULIAN

And he's right.

[SEVERO *starts as if angry*—JULIAN *continues more gently.*

Oh, I know your devotion to me—the honesty of your motive—but if out there shameless persons make a gutter frolic of the reputation of an innocent woman and two honest men, at

least let us shut our door against it.—Here, under my roof, I have my own eyes to look after my own affairs—and if need arises I have steel and my own right arm.

SEVERO

And it will come to that if we let it go on. Stop it—I say—stop it where it is.

JULIAN, *tensely*

That we shall—you may be sure! And in a way all Madrid will ring with.

SEVERO, *appeasingly*

No, no, no—that's just what we must avoid.—With calmness and prudence we must order this affair—like sensible men of the world—and not precipitate a *new* embarrassment. There is no need here of passion or violence—the matter is not beyond repair. *(Lightly.)* As yet, it is nothing—*really* nothing!

ERNESTO

[*With sardonic laughter, at first; then with rebuke, and crescent vehemence.*

'Nothing'? 'Nothing,' indeed? To nag and torture him with doubts and suspicion—that is nothing? You hurry to him with every new

invention of scandal and slander—but that is nothing! You din into his ears the malicious prattle of club, café, the very street corner—and that is nothing? You tell him he is threatened with shame and dishonour—destroy his peace of mind—kill his faith in everything he holds dearest and sweetest—the wife adored—the friend cherished—and that is nothing! You drag into his house the mire of the streets—stamp it on his hearth-stone—and when you have maddened him by the infamy, you bid him 'be calm' because 'it is nothing'—'really nothing'! Look—

[*Pointing to* JULIAN.

his face drawn by anguish—and the tears we saw in Teodora's eyes—they are *nothing?*

SEVERO

No, not to you—else you'd end it all.

ERNESTO

I'll hunt out these traducers—I only wait Julian's word—to begin with them.

SEVERO

There's a simpler way and a quicker one—leave here!

JULIAN

[*Coming between them.*

Severo, *I* am master in this house—

SEVERO

[*Waving* JULIAN *aside; to* ERNESTO.

Leave here! That will end it!

ERNESTO

Right! I leave this house to-day. I leave the country the moment my affairs are arranged.

JULIAN

And I forbid one and both.—What! Justify their slander—lend colour to their lies, by running away? Let them think they've frightened us—or shamed us? What has come over you, Don Severo—to suggest such a course?

[*To* ERNESTO.

You remain here—with us—and our life goes on as before.—*Just* as before!

ERNESTO

That is impossible, Julian. Things will never again be as they were. For no fault of our own —for nothing *we* have done—or should ever do

—those dear days are over. There's come into our lives a subtle, insidious, venomous poison, stronger than we are—stronger than our faith, our trust, stronger even than our friendship.—That is the meanest part of calumny—you fight it—you *vanquish* it—but you carry a scar

[*Beats his heart.*

that never heals!—Don Severo is right—it is for me to go.

SEVERO

Without question—and without delay.—*(Disdainfully.)* And if you haven't the ready means, my brother will supply them.

ERNESTO, *indignantly*

Don Severo, you seem bent on insulting me!—You are Julian's brother, and I love him—but you presume too far—

JULIAN, *interposing*

No, no—he meant kindly.—I'm sure my brother doesn't forget what I owe Ernesto's father.

SEVERO

Repay it, then—as freely as you like—but not at

the price of our place before the world—and your career.

JULIAN, *impatiently*

I'll not listen to you.

[*Starts to leave.*

ERNESTO

[*Stopping him.*

But you must, Julian—there's no going back now —the mischief has been done.

[JULIAN *makes a gesture of protest.*

Oh, yes—the very words he has just spoken—the fact that we've had to hear them—proves it —and that we, in turn, speak of them, proves it the more.—It were folly for you and me to ignore a foe that has already disarmed us, even before we dreamed of attack, and put us at the mercy of malice and *stupidity!*

[*The last word is thrown at* SEVERO.

SEVERO

Call it what you please!—But I will stop at nothing, I warn you, to end a condition I believe dangerous to Julian's happiness and position.

SERVANT, *announcing*

Captain Beaulieu.

JULIAN

[*To* SERVANT.

Yes—show Captain Beaulieu in—then tell Madame.

[SERVANT *goes out.*

JULIAN

[*After a slight pause.*

Now, see to what we have come here! Misunderstanding—bitterness—ugly words, where before was good-will, and cheer, and good-fellowship.—And all through the idle gossip of people who care nothing for us—and we less for them.—Now let's have an end of it—and of your talk of leaving us!

[CAPTAIN BEAULIEU *enters:* JULIAN *crosses to greet him.*

BEAULIEU

[*To* JULIAN.

So glad of this chance to see you before you leave. When do you go?

JULIAN

That rests with the Foreign Office, Captain.

[JULIAN, *at a nod from* SEVERO, *joins the latter on the balcony where they walk to and fro, in animated conversation.*

BEAULIEU

[*To* ERNESTO.

How stands the Embassy matter?

ERNESTO, *confused*

Why—I—don't quite know—

BEAULIEU

Still wabbles, eh?

ERNESTO

I believe so.

BEAULIEU

I thought as much.

ERNESTO, *alert*

You've heard something?

BEAULIEU

[*Glances toward the others.*

No, no, but when I came in—I thought I smelt

powder.—But that may be only this over-sensitive, diplomatic nose of mine.—Of course, we never mix up in these matters—officially—but you know I'm awfully fond of Don Julian and you and Donna Teodora—and I like Donna Mercedes and little Pepito—all the family in fact, with possibly one exception—whom, of course, I won't mention by name, except to say I'd never take him for Don Julian's brother. But you know who's making all the trouble, don't you?

ERNESTO

Do *you*, Captain?

BEAULIEU

Everyone does—it's the Marquis Alvarez. He's been pulling wires at our Legation—or, rather, trying to.—But he got precious little satisfaction—and I dropped a hint if that sort of work went on, I'd go to the Queen—she's English, God bless her!—and ask fair play for Julian.

ERNESTO

Thank you—you're very good.

BEAULIEU

And you won't mind a bit of counsel, from a fellow who likes you?

ERNESTO

I'll be grateful.

BEAULIEU

Well, then—don't let Alvarez *draw* you.

ERNESTO

Draw?—What do you mean?

BEAULIEU

Don't play into his hands by an open quarrel. That's his game—from what I gather—to push matters to an explosion—and involve Julian in the crash—

ERNESTO

Yes, so it would seem.—But it's really at *me* he's striking—over *Julian's* head—

BEAULIEU

[*As if enlightened.*

Oho! That complicates matters.

ERNESTO

On the contrary—simplifies them.—Alvarez will quiet down the moment I'm out of the way.

BEAULIEU, *surprised*

'Out of the way!'—Where are you going, boy?

ERNESTO

South America—the Rio Plata region.

BEAULIEU, *gaily*

The Argentine! I've been there. Delightful country!—Almost as many rainy days as London.—Jolly lot of people—and excellent beef!

[*With sudden change to seriousness.*

And *when* did this happen?

ERNESTO

Oh, some time ago I decided on leaving Madrid—My father had interests out there—mines and a tea-plantation—and I'm going to look up the stray ends of the estate—

BEAULIEU

Soon?

ERNESTO

I'm sailing in a week or two, at the latest.

BEAULIEU, *impulsively*

Good!

[*Correcting himself.*

I beg your pardon—

[TEODORA *and* MERCEDES, *followed by* PEPITO, *appear at the balcony-entrance.*

You understand?

ERNESTO

Of course—and—thanks!

[BEAULIEU *goes to meet* TEODORA *and* MERCEDES.

PEPITO

[*Comes down to* ERNESTO *and leans across the table, half whispering.*

You're not angry with me?

ERNESTO

No, no, boy, of course not—you meant no harm.

PEPITO

Only told you those things, to put you on your guard.

ERNESTO

Yes, yes, it's all right.

[*Turns to go.*

PEPITO, *persisting*

And after all—you can't help it—you and Teo—if you've come to care for each other.

ERNESTO

[*Hardly suppressing his frenzy.*

By God! Pepito! Don't you say that—ever again—or anything like it!

TEODORA

[*Entering, to* CAPTAIN BEAULIEU.

So glad Don Ernesto thought to ask you to dine with us.

BEAULIEU

And I. Most of the Legation people are *En-vacances.* I don't know what to do with myself evenings.

TEODORA

Then maybe you'll come on to the opera with us?

BEAULIEU

For your charming company—thanks.—What particular form does the trouble take to-night?

TEODORA, *perplexed*

Why?—

BEAULIEU

One of my stock jokes, dear lady.—What's the opera, I mean?

TEODORA

'Galeoto.'

BEAULIEU

Don't know it—new?

TEODORA

Quite—the season's one novelty.

BEAULIEU

One o' those awful made-in-Germany affairs?

TEODORA

Oh, no—Italy—the new school.

BEAULIEU

Heavy?

TEODORA

Au contraire.

[*Music is heard through the balcony windows.*

There, that answers you! The street bands have it now—and the barrel organs in a week.

[*All listen for a few seconds to the music.*

BEAULIEU

Yes, I think I'm up to that.

SEVERO

Do you have much opera in London?

BEAULIEU

Not enough to hurt, thank Heaven! You know there never was a people who loved music who could fight.

MERCEDES

Oh, Captain—the Germans, *they* love music.

BEAULIEU

Oh, but bless you, dear lady, what they think is music *isn't* music—

[*With assurance.*

not as we English understand music!

TEODORA

The Russians, then? Their composers are doing wonders—running away from their rivals.

BEAULIEU

They did that at Port Arthur, too, and at Mukden—as many as could get away.—No—the best fighters we English ever met were the Boers—and can you imagine a Dutch Boer singing grand-opera or playing the harp?

SEVERO, *proudly*

But we Spaniards also love music.

BEAULIEU

[*Disconcerted for a moment.*

Ah, thank you—the *exception* that proves my rule.—Until this moment I never could think of one.

[*To* TEODORA.

Tell me—the opera to-night—in Spanish?

TEODORA

Oh, no, the original—you know Italian?

BEAULIEU

Not much—Vostra Eccelenza—and Bella Signorina—and of course, Chianti and that sort of thing.—What's it about?

TEODORA

Oh, no, that'll spoil the surprise.

BEAULIEU

Yes, but I'll spoil your evening, with no end of questions—and have them hissing at our box.

TEODORA

It's the story of Francesca and Paolo.

BEAULIEU

I'm lost again.

ERNESTO

The same story as your English Launcelot and Guinevere.

BEAULIEU

Oh, yes, I remember them—never could spell their

names right—But I don't recall the 'Galeoto' Johnny!

TEODORA

He's in *Dante's* story.

BEAULIEU

The usual 'other fellow,' eh?—Sings tenor?

ERNESTO

No, Galeoto is the go-between—the mischief-maker. He brings Francesca and Paolo the gossip of the court—the quips and jests and wanton rhymes that play about them.—To each in turn, he tells the general report of the other's love—meaning no harm, of course! Oh, no!—And when they flout his story—he says: 'Look about you! What does that side-glance mean, as you pass, the nudge—the grin—the shrug of shoulder—the flippant word thrown after?' Little by little he has Francesca and Paolo seriously concerned,—at first each for self, and then for each other!

TEODORA, *lightly*

That's the *crux* of the opera!

BEAULIEU, *approvingly*

Pretty idea!

ERNESTO

[*Continuing with more fervour.*

In the end, you see a man and woman, at first indifferent, thrown into each other's arms, utterly despite themselves, by the subtle, insidious, fiendish power of trifles.—The arch passion flaming up in souls that, *unfanned by scandal,* would have flickered on forever, harmlessly, innocently—*ignorant* of evil—except for 'Galeoto'—

SEVERO

Who, if the truth were known, only did his duty.

BEAULIEU

Well, I call him a rotter, a perfect rotter!—Sings bass, I'll wager.

SEVERO, *drily*

For all that, Captain, the world will always believe 'where there's smoke there's fire.'

BEAULIEU

Yes—but what the world takes for *smoke* is very often nothing but *dust* kicked up by a lot of busy-bodies.

[*Turning to* ERNESTO.

I thought I smelt powder!

[FOOTMEN *draw aside the curtains of the balcony-doors, disclosing the dinner-table, splendid with silver, candelabra and flowers. Suspended above the table is a large antique lantern.*

FIRST FOOTMAN, *advancing*

Dinner is served!

[TEODORA, ERNESTO, CAPTAIN BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *walk slowly toward the balcony, chatting animatedly. They stop by the open doors.*

MERCEDES

[*To* JULIAN.

Oh, we dine on the balcony?

JULIAN

You think it's too cool?

MERCEDES

No, but—

[*In a lower voice.*

Where everyone can see?

JULIAN

[*With a surprised look at* SEVERO.

Well, upon my word!

SEVERO

You know the Alvarez live just across the street.

MERCEDES

[*With a nod toward* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA.

And they watch every little thing that goes on here.

JULIAN

Well, what of it? What goes on here they shouldn't see? They or anyone else—

[MERCEDES *shrugs her shoulders.*

Do you suppose I'm going to alter my house, my ways—because loose tongues and light minds choose to—

MERCEDES

No, of course not! But since they are all so eager to talk, why give them any excuse, even the flimsiest?

JULIAN

If for nothing else, to show how we despise their talk—how little it touches us.—This house might be of glass for all they could see to our discredit.

[*Calling.*

Captain Beaulieu, will you take in the Donna Mercedes?

[BEAULIEU *gives his arm to* MERCEDES.

Ernesto—

[ERNESTO *continues in lively conversation with* TEODORA, *and takes no notice.*

[*In a louder tone.*

Ernesto!

[ERNESTO *still does not hear.*

[*Calling again with some temper.*

Ernesto!

ERNESTO

[*Lightly, turning and coming to him.*

Hello, what is it?

JULIAN

I called you three times.

ERNESTO

I beg pardon—I didn't hear—we were so interested—

JULIAN

Evidently—yes!

ERNESTO

[*After a pause.*

Well, well, Julian—what do you wish?

JULIAN

[*Looking at him closely.*

Why—take in Teodora!

[ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *join the others on the balcony.*

JULIAN

[*To* SEVERO, *after a pause.*

What do you suppose they were talking about?

SEVERO, *viciously*

'Galeoto,' of course!

JULIAN

[*Gazing after them.*

Did you notice—he didn't hear me?

SEVERO

You called him only three times.

JULIAN

Yes, three times I had to call him.—I wonder why
—h'm—Severo, *why?*

[*Seizes* SEVERO'S *hand, tensely.*

SEVERO

[*With a smile of triumph.*

Ah, you're beginning to see—at last!

JULIAN

[*Pulling himself together. Passes his right hand over his brow as if to get rid of an ugly thought.*

No, no, no!

[*Drops* SEVERO'S *hand excitedly.*

There's nothing to see. Only for a moment—
God forgive me—I caught your madness—

TEODORA

[*Calling from the balcony.*

Julian.

JULIAN

Come—they're waiting—and, brother,

[*Lightly.*

never again, if you love me, one word of these —phantoms!

[*Laughingly.*

—phantoms!

[*There is animated chatter and laughter at the table.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

THE SCENE *is* ERNESTO'S *lodgings, in a small hotel attached to a popular café. The furnishings, though meagre and time-worn, give the room the air of a studio. Double doors at the right lead to the public hallway: at the back, towards the left, is a similar door opening into the bedroom, while towards the right there is a casement window, with a striped awning, and a flower-box on the sill. On the left, a door leads into a corridor which is set at an angle.*

The general appearance of the room indicates preparations for ERNESTO'S *departure: the bookcases are almost emptied of their contents, and the mantelpiece stripped of pictures and photographs. On the floor are trunks and boxes, some open, some closed and strapped. Clothes and other articles are scattered about.*

When the curtain rises, ERNESTO *is putting books and papers in a travelling bag.* GENARO *enters, humming or singing the waltz from "Galeoto," which the band is playing in the café garden below. He breaks off the song instantly on seeing* ERNESTO.

ERNESTO

Who is it, Genaro?

GENARO

The young Don Pepito.

PEPITO

[*Entering briskly.*

Are you in, Ernesto?

ERNESTO

Of course, boy!

PEPITO

[*Indicating* GENARO.

He wasn't certain—Beaulieu's waiting below—

[*Goes to the door and calls out.*

Captain! Only one more flight!

[*Signals to him.*

ERNESTO

[*To* GENARO.

Ask Captain Beaulieu to be good enough to come up—and, Genaro, close the window—

GENARO

Excellent music, to-day, sir.

PEPITO

They're playing 'Galeoto.'

ERNESTO

Yes, yes—but I don't care to hear it, to-day—

[GENARO, *in response to a gesture from* ERNESTO, *closes the window and goes out.*

PEPITO

[*With feeling.*

No more do I, Ernesto—

[*Noting the preparations for departure.*

Can't that wait?

ERNESTO

No—they'll be coming for the trunks, presently.

—Why?

PEPITO

Oh, I don't know—but somehow—

[*Touches his eye furtively.*

I don't like to see you—When do you go?

ERNESTO

To-night—I leave Madrid—forever!

PEPITO, *protesting*

Oh, no!

ERNESTO, *firmly*

Yes, Pepito—*forever!*

[GENARO *is heard singing.*

There's Beaulieu.

BEAULIEU

[*Heard speaking to* GENARO.

All right—I'll find my way.

[*Enters, breathing hard and fanning himself.*

Regular song-bird, isn't he, that landlord? What's the idea?

ERNESTO

An old custom of the house, he says—handed down from father to son.

BEAULIEU

[*Throwing himself in a chair, wearily.*

Pretty idea!

[*Fanning himself.*

By Jove, three years in India take it out of a fellow!

PEPITO, *chaffingly*

Not you! At an Embassy ball I've seen you dance half the men off the floor.

BEAULIEU

Oh, that's in the line of *duty*, my boy.

[*Crosses to* ERNESTO.

But climbing three flights of stairs to bid *bon voyage* to a fellow you're fond of, is mere *pleasure!*

ERNESTO

Really, Captain?

BEAULIEU

Well, you know what I mean.—But I'm hoping Julian may induce you to change your plans.

ERNESTO

Nothing could induce me to remain in Madrid.

BEAULIEU

But go *with him*, I mean.—The Embassy matter's settled, you know.

ERNESTO

[*Somewhat embarrassed.*

No—I—I—haven't seen Julian for some days.—I must send him a line at once—to tell him how glad I am—

[*Sits at the desk preparing to write.*

He might have let me know.

[*Writes.*

BEAULIEU

It was announced only this morning—at least, we only got the news then at our legation.

ERNESTO

[*As he writes.*

Thank you for bringing me word. It will lighten my dismal journey immensely. For all his seeming *not to care*, I know Julian's heart was set on this appointment.

PEPITO

And he can thank *you* for it.

ERNESTO, *laughing*

How on earth do *I* figure in it?

PEPITO

Just because you're *out* of it. Why, the moment it got about that you weren't going as Secretary, all opposition ended, and Julian's appointment was confirmed. Isn't that so, Captain?

BEAULIEU, *curtly*

Don't know anything about it.

PEPITO

Well, anyway, that's what they say.

ERNESTO

[*Sealing the note.*

Oh, 'that's what they say?'

[*Rises.*

PEPITO

Yes, and they say, too—Alvarez is raging—
You've cut the ground from under his feet.

ERNESTO

[*To* BEAULIEU.

You see I was right, Captain.

BEAULIEU, *nodding*

I suppose so.—I say, it's to Buenos Ayres you're going?

ERNESTO

For a while, yes.

BEAULIEU

I've brought you letters to some people out there —may be of service—until you get acquainted—

[*Running through three or four letters.*

These chaps 'll put you up at a club or two—and this letter's to my sister and her husband —he's in our Legation there. Trump of a fellow!

ERNESTO

[*Deeply moved.*

Letters to your people!—Beaulieu, I don't dare to tell you how grateful I am—

PEPITO, *exuberantly*

I'll do it for you—

[*Takes a step toward* BEAULIEU.

Captain, if you were a Spaniard, like Ernesto and myself—I'd kiss you.

BEAULIEU, *retreating*

Pretty idea!—But there's nothing Spanish in my family!

PEPITO

I'm going to tell my father what you've done.

BEAULIEU

Pretty idea, too!

[*With some temper.*

But I don't think you need bother.

PEPITO

[*With feeling.*

Oh, don't blame my father for what's happened—

[*To* ERNESTO.

You don't, Ernesto?

ERNESTO

[*With kindness.*

No one's to blame—and nothing has happened.

PEPITO

It *would* have—if you'd stayed here—and the talk kept up. There was bound to be a quarrel with *somebody.*

ERNESTO, *bitterly*

Yes, with *somebody.*

PEPITO

Alvarez, probably.

ERNESTO, *listlessly*

Yes—Alvarez—

PEPITO

And my father wanted to avoid that.

BEAULIEU, *explosively*

Then, why in thunder didn't he mind his own—

[*With a sudden change of tone, as if to himself.*

Pretty idea—why don't *I?*

ERNESTO

[*As if explaining to* BEAULIEU.

After all, Don Severo may really believe he's acting for the best.

PEPITO

My father's of the old school—he hasn't travelled, Beaulieu, like you and I—hasn't seen the world —the great world. Some of his notions I don't approve—

BEAULIEU, *chaffingly*

No?

PEPITO

Wears low collars at the opera—and won't have the champagne iced.—But, between ourselves, here—I'm not so certain he's wrong in this matter.

ERNESTO

[*Pausing in his work of putting things in a trunk.*

What do you mean, Pepito?

PEPITO

Well, of course, the world says you musn't watch your wife—or keep a curb on her.—You must let her do as she pleases. Because, if you don't, she will, anyway—and a bit more so! Well,

some fine morning—or evening—she *does do* as she pleases, and *then* the world says: 'Well, it served her husband right! What could he expect? He always let her do just as she pleased!'

GENARO, *entering*

A messenger from Señor Moreno.

ERNESTO

Yes?

GENARO

He's waiting for you at the Alcazar *Café.*

ERNESTO

Yes—say I'll be over at once—And, have this sent immediately.

[GENARO *goes out.*

BEAULIEU, *questioning*

Moreno? Who's he?

ERNESTO

The steamship agent—to arrange about my ticket and baggage—

[*Takes his hat as if to go.*

I won't be long—

PEPITO

[*Stopping him.*

The Alcazar! Oh, don't go over there—

ERNESTO

But I've an appointment—

PEPITO

Well, I'll go for you—

ERNESTO

But—why?

PEPITO

You're sure to run into Alvarez and his crowd—they're always there—

ERNESTO

Well?—

BEAULIEU

Pepito's right.—Let him go for you.

ERNESTO

Nonsense! I'll only be there a few minutes.

BEAULIEU

Well, then, I'll go with you.

ERNESTO

[*Fondly, with arm on* BEAULIEU'S *shoulder.*

Dear old Beaulieu—

[*Laughing lightly.*

You'd think I was still a boy.

BEAULIEU

Gad! You Latin fellows never get over being boys. Come along!

ERNESTO

[*At the door.*

Pepito, while I'm gone, you might throw some things in that chest, for me—those books—

[*Points to the books on the table.*

the pictures—

[*Points to the pictures on the cabinet.*

any odds and ends—if you will.—And, Pepito, in the room at the end of that corridor—

[*Goes to the door on the left, and indicates room.*

you'll find my foils and fencing traps—will you fetch them, like a good fellow?

[*Goes out with* BEAULIEU.

PEPITO

Yes, I'll have them ready.

[*He gathers together various articles from the table and book-cases and puts them in the travelling-chest and trunks. Now and then he stops and listens to the music heard very faintly from the café below. He goes to the window, and opens it, so that the music is heard more distinctly. Going to the cabinet, he picks up two or three picture-frames and looks at them.*

Ernesto's father—Don Florio—

[*Looks at another.*

One of me—taken in Havana—Don Julian—and the frame's mate empty. Teo's picture used to be there. Well, he's right—better keep reminders out of sight.

[*Puts frames in one of the chests. Picks up a book from the table near-by, and reads the title—'Dante—The Divine Comedy.'*

[*A photograph falls from the book. He picks it up, and looks at it.*

H'm—Teo—Trala, she *is* a beauty! I don't wonder Julian is in love with her.

[*Pause.*

And it wouldn't be a wonder if *Ernesto*—We'll put it back in the book—

[*As he does so he notices writing on the back of the picture.*

Verses—Ernesto's writing—No—not verses—

[*Reads.*

'Now and then, Fate leads two weak humans face to face, and says "You twain are mates" —"You belong together—body and soul"— And when that happens—as with Francesca and Paolo—faith—loyalty, pride are vain words. Love doesn't heed them, nor even hear them. When that happens—'

[GENARO *is heard singing.*

[*Continuing, as he puts the picture in the*

book, and throws the book into a trunk, which he closes with a bang.

'When that happens'—trunks can't be packed too quickly!

[*Goes out hastily through the door opening into the corridor.*

[GENARO *enters, humming or singing as usual, followed by* JULIAN *and* SEVERO.

JULIAN

[*Looking about.*

Don Ernesto is out?

GENARO

Would seem so.

[*Resumes singing and crosses to the door of the bed-room, looking in.*

Not in his bed-room, either. He must just have gone.

SEVERO

[*Annoyed by the singing.*

If you please, my good fellow—

GENARO, *turning*

I beg pardon, a custom of the house—A custom of

the house, Sir—understood by our regular guests, and I believe appreciated.

JULIAN

Don Ernesto is expected back soon?

GENARO

Doubtless—at least, I hope so.

[*Holds up a letter.*

Here's a message—just come—marked 'urgent.'

JULIAN

We'll wait!

[PEPITO *enters, carrying fencing foils, masks, etc.*

SEVERO, *surprised*

You here?

PEPITO

Helping Ernesto pack his traps.

[*To* JULIAN.

You wish to see him?

JULIAN

At once.

GENARO

I'll send word to the Alcazar Café.

[PEPITO *puts foils in case.*

PEPITO, *turning*

He's gone to meet the steamship agent about his baggage and tickets.

JULIAN

You go—tell him we are here—ask him to come as soon as possible.

[*Recalls* PEPITO.

And, Pepito, tell him he's to cancel his steamship ticket—stop preparations for leaving—he's not going—

[*With a glance at* SEVERO.

tell him *I* said so—Be quick about it.

PEPITO

I'll run every step.

[*Goes out hastily.*

SEVERO

[*Recalling* GENARO, *who is about to follow* PEPITO.

Don Ernesto is sailing?—

GENARO

To-morrow.

SEVERO

[*As if to himself.*

Good.

GENARO

His trunks are 'most ready now. He goes to-night to Cadiz—there takes the steamer *El Cid* for Buenos Ayres.

SEVERO

[*Half to himself.*

Fresh wind to his sail and good speed!

GENARO

You are friends of Don Ernesto?

[SEVERO *makes a sign of impatience.*

JULIAN

Yes, Oh, yes.

GENARO

Well, permit me to say, gentlemen, your friend is a gentleman. You may take my word for it. A complete gentleman.

SEVERO

In Don Ernesto's name we thank you.

GENARO

Yes, gentlemen, a complete gentleman. Even though he drinks little wine and that rather cheap, he is a gentleman—you may take my word for it—no matter what they say.—Of course, a person in my position is in the way of hearing a lot of *gossip.*

[JULIAN *crosses the room as if to get out of hearing of what is likely to follow.*

But I know enough not to repeat the stuff.—They say for instance—they say—

SEVERO

Yes, they say?—

JULIAN

[*As if to dismiss* GENARO.

We don't care what they say.

GENARO

No more do I, Sir. He's young, clever, good-looking and if, *as they say*—

[*He places the sealed note on the table, so that it can be readily seen by* SEVERO.

some charming lady chooses to make a fool of her old husband, why—I'm sure Don Ernesto will show himself—a—a—perfect gentleman. You may take my word for it, gentlemen.

JULIAN

[*With a gesture of dismissal.*

Yes, we'll take your word if you'll be good enough to take your leave.

GENARO

[*Takes the sherry-decanter from the buffet, and puts it on the table.*

Certainly.—A glass of Xeres, perhaps, while you wait?

JULIAN

No, thank you.—If you'll tell Don Ernesto as soon as he enters—

GENARO

Certainly—And will the gentlemen call the young gentleman's attention to this note—here on the table? It came just after he'd gone.

[*Goes out.*

JULIAN

[*Looking after* GENARO, *and then at* SEVERO.

'They say'—'they say!'—

SEVERO

[*Takes the note and thrusts it under* JULIAN'S *eyes.*

Do you wonder?

JULIAN, *surprised*

Teodora!

SEVERO

[*Turning the letter.*

Her writing—her seal!

JULIAN

[*Takes the letter and looks at it dubiously.*

After all—a farewell.

SEVERO, *cynically*

Rubbish—A rendezvous!

JULIAN, *savagely*

Severo—is there no limit to your—

SEVERO

[*As if in challenge.*

Read it—*read* it!

JULIAN

[*As if to break the seal of the letter.*

Yes, if only to prove—No!

[*Puts the letter back on the table.*

That were the last meanness!

SEVERO

Then give it back—unopened—or I shall.

[*Approaches the letter.*

JULIAN, *interposing*

It isn't yours to dispose of—nor mine.—Leave it!
I'm not afraid.

SEVERO

But, by God, I *am* afraid, I own it.

JULIAN

And I, too, am afraid—

SEVERO

Then, why—

JULIAN

But Teodora shall not *know* I'm afraid. For I'm not afraid of her—of her love—her loyalty.—But I *am* afraid of myself—of you—and Mercedes—Pepito—afraid of what all this fear—and doubt—suspicion—and questioning may work with her—

[SEVERO *makes a gesture of impatience.*

JULIAN, *continuing*

Most of all afraid lest she discover that my heart shelters this story that my lips deny and my intelligence rejects.—I know Teodora—as no one else knows her—She is the proudest creature in the world—If I *must* lose her love, I'll take good care not to gain her contempt.

SEVERO

There's something worse!

JULIAN

No, *that's* the worst! Severo, a woman may despise her lover, and still love him, but once she despises her husband!—

SEVERO

Despise, indeed! Because you act the part of prudence and common sense—Because you shut out temptation—opportunity—from a wife young, beautiful and damnably romantic—In such a case, caution is not cowardice—it's a compliment.

JULIAN

To a woman like Teodora, it's an insult. She's shown it—from the moment that man left us—

SEVERO

He went of his own accord.

JULIAN

But *I* let him go—When I should have barred the door, and said 'No, no, I forbid it! The stories are lies! These dangers are phantoms conjured by mischief or malice—They'll scurry back to the hell from which they came, if we but look them straight in the face'—*That*, Severo, would have been the thing to do.

SEVERO

No! *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre!*—Yes, if Teodora didn't love him—and he her.

JULIAN

[*Approaching* SEVERO, *almost threateningly.*

Have you gone mad? You believe that?

[*Turns.*

No! No!

[*Throws himself in a chair.*

SEVERO, *coldly*

It is no kindness to keep the truth from you now. You are fighting not only lies and phantoms—that were easy enough!—but there's come into the hearts of this man and woman a resistless and relentless longing—

JULIAN, *appealingly*

No, brother—

SEVERO

Your courage and chivalry—her pride—Ernesto's faith—if he have any—mean nothing now. *They love.*

JULIAN

No, no, you are wrong—Ask Mercedes—

SEVERO

You ask Mercedes—Trust a woman to read *that* secret.

JULIAN, *rises*

And I let him go. And you—*you*—my brother, who vows he loves and honours me—you stood by and saw me fall into that abyss of infamy and folly—You urged—*demanded*—that he go!

SEVERO

Yes, and I'll not know an hour's peace until he's gone.

JULIAN

And I'll not know a *moment's* peace, *after* he's gone.

SEVERO

For all that, he must go!

[*Sits at the table.*

JULIAN

No, he must stay!

SEVERO

But, why—if she loves him—why?

[*With anger, and rebelliously.*

That's why!—If I send him away I send her heart and her soul with him—if what you say is true. There remains here, with me, the empty form of a woman—who shudders at my approach—whose lips chill under mine—whose arms deny response to my embrace—whose eyes, cold and pitiless, will never know a tear except for him—the lover, forced from her by the husband, jealous and disdained! Severo—I'm a proud man, with reverence for the name I bear, but rather than that torture—*dishonour!*

SEVERO

But with him away, your house is safe.—And your career, too! Events at the Foreign Office make that clear enough; the instant he's eliminated, your appointment's confirmed!

JULIAN

Yes—and on such terms, though only implied, I declined it!—I'll make no compromise with slander—not for an Embassy to the Kingdom of Heaven!—And as for Ernesto—

[*Sits, opposite* SEVERO.

He stays, I tell you! I can fight the man of flesh and blood—fight him with my perfect faith —my devotion to her, my adoration, but I *can't* fight the ideal creature she would raise up to take his place once he's gone from here. I can fight the *man*—I can't fight the martyr, haloed by her imagination and her pity—He stays—and I *fight!*

SEVERO, *grimly*

You'll lose.

JULIAN

No, no!

SEVERO

Alas! Yes—you'll lose!

JULIAN

[*Hitting the table with his hand.*

Be it then!—I *lose*—if some purpose of God or devil wills it so—But I lose to a *man*—not a shadow!

[BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *enter.*

PEPITO

[*To* BEAULIEU, *indicating* JULIAN *and* SEVERO.

Oh, they're still here—

BEAULIEU

[*To* JULIAN *and* SEVERO.

Waiting for Ernesto?

SEVERO

To take our leave—

[*With a glance at* JULIAN.

He's *going* to-night!

PEPITO

If he's lucky!

[BEAULIEU *nudges* PEPITO *and motions* '*silence.*'

JULIAN

[*Seeing the movement.*

Lucky!

PEPITO, *confused*

I—I—mean if nothing stops him.

SEVERO, *decisively*

Nothing will stop him.

BEAULIEU

I wish I felt as certain about it.

SEVERO

You may.

BEAULIEU

Oh, I've seen him with the foils—this Alvarez.

JULIAN, *alert*

Alvarez! Ernesto and he—

PEPITO, *stammering*

Why, yes, but—but—you weren't to know.

JULIAN

But now we *do* know. They've quarrelled—where?

PEPITO

At the Alcazar—before a crowd—

SEVERO

The shame of it!—Ernesto sought the—

BEAULIEU

No, no! Did his best to avoid it. Had an appointment there, some business about his sailing. Alvarez and his friends had just risen to

go when they caught sight of Ernesto—they turned from their table to take another near ours—and then they began!—

JULIAN

Yes, go on—

BEAULIEU

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*

Oh, you know that crowd—what they can do, what they can say, over a table; kill a reputation between every cigarette puff and bring on a fresh victim with every change of glasses. Under their hands the marble slab becomes a dissecting board. And when they've done, it might better serve as a tombstone for the good names they've ruined.

SEVERO

Ernesto should have left—

JULIAN, *thunderingly*

No! No!

BEAULIEU

He tried every way to avoid them—pretended not to notice. Looked only at Pepito and me—

chattered like a magpie about everything and nothing—the weather, the opera, the ship he's sailing on. But Alvarez wouldn't have it—laughed in his face, raised his voice, pointed at him!—I changed my place so as to get between him and Ernesto—and with that the cur cried out—a name!

PEPITO

Yes, so everyone heard—the whole room-full!

BEAULIEU

No holding Ernesto after that!

JULIAN

He struck him, then?

PEPITO

No, not yet—he wanted to be sure, *quite* sure. He crossed to Alvarez' table, quivering like a leaf, so he could hardly speak. 'Who dares,' he asked, 'ridicule an honourable man?' '*You*, his *friend*'—Alvarez shouted—'you do—you, and the Donna'—

JULIAN

Teodora—Great God!

BEAULIEU

No, he didn't say it! His lips closed with Ernesto's blow.

SEVERO

With glove?

PEPITO

[*Interrupting gleefully.*

'Glove' nothing! tout-a-fait Anglais—Le boxe —bing!

[*With a gesture indicating a stiff blow on the chin.*

[*To* BEAULIEU.

The upper slice, eh?

BEAULIEU

Cut, upper cut.

PEPITO, *continuing*

Alvarez clean over the table—on the floor—glasses, bottles, chairs. His friends put him on his feet—and in ten minutes all the details were arranged.

JULIAN, *joyously*

Good! And Ernesto's seconds?

PEPITO

The Marquis Acedo and Mario Sanchez.

JULIAN

Friends of Alvarez?

PEPITO

Wasn't time to find others.

BEAULIEU

I offered—but Ernesto said 'no', I'd get in trouble with my government—

JULIAN

And *when*—to-morrow?

PEPITO

No, Alvarez asked for to-morrow, but Ernesto insisted *to-day.*

JULIAN

The hour?

PEPITO, *hesitating*

Ernesto forbade—

JULIAN

Lest I take his place!—The time, Pepito.

BEAULIEU, *interposing*

No, Pepito.

JULIAN

But, why?

BEAULIEU

You're playing Alvarez' game for him.—Don't you see?—This is the very thing he wanted—an open *esclandre!*—Just what he's been intriguing for. Up to now he's been fighting you with dirty tattle—gutter gossip—that everyone knew to be lies! But *now*—with a duel to dignify the talk—he has a *different* weapon. He has sworn you shall not have this appointment. He is a violent, desperate man—will go to any lengths to have his way—and you're playing right into his hands! He involves you in scandal so notorious and possibly so tragic—no government dare ignore it. A duel with a rat like that—By Jove!—It's sacrilege to honest steel!

SEVERO

It is the Spanish way—for all we love music!

BEAULIEU

Yes, but if you don't mind my saying so, your Spanish way is like your Spanish wine—out of fashion! Picturesque, your Spanish ways, but

like your old castles very uncomfortable. Now, in *my* country—

SEVERO

Cold blood—all of you!

BEAULIEU

Not all of us—don't you believe it! Scandal doesn't bother about the latitude. This sort of thing happens with us, too—but we manage differently and, I believe, better. See—*here*, a scamp does his best to injure you—smirches your good name—spreads ill and lying reports—and to avenge yourself—to punish *him*—you let him poke six inches of cold steel into your ribs. Pretty idea, if you like—but bad business!

SEVERO

But an affair of honour—

BEAULIEU

Oh, hang it, my dear fellow, honour is a thing within one's self—in one's own watch and ward. Heaven forbid it should be at the mercy of every flippant tongue and evil mind.

JULIAN

[*In a tone that indicates he has already answered his own question.*

What shall one do with such a man as Alvarez?

BEAULIEU

Just what Ernesto did—and more of the same sort! Cane him, kick him, brand him—*kill* him if you like—but don't let the devil kill you! And that's just what he'll do if you give him the chance.

JULIAN, *grimly*

No, he will not.

BEAULIEU

My God, he will! He's the strongest arm, the quickest wrist, in Madrid, to-day.

JULIAN

But not to-morrow—I promise you that.

[*To* PEPITO.

When do they meet, Pepito?

PEPITO

[*After a frightened glance at* SEVERO.

Why—why—four o'clock.

JULIAN

[*To* SEVERO, *glancing hurriedly at his watch.*

We have just time—come!

BEAULIEU

[*To* PEPITO.

You've blundered, my boy.

PEPITO

[*To* SEVERO.

Have I, father—*blundered?*

JULIAN, *joyously*

Blundered!

[*With his hands on* PEPITO'S *shoulders.*

You dear, delightful boy—you've done the best day's work of your life—

[*Turning to* SEVERO.

Severo—if anything happens to me—*whatever* happens—good or bad—half of everything I have is Pepito's—*all*, if he wants it—and my eternal gratitude besides!

SEVERO

For *what?* Planning this *holiday?*

JULIAN

It *is* a holiday!

BEAULIEU, *warningly*

Please, please, Don Julian, don't underrate your opponent. When you face Alvarez—

JULIAN

[*In a sort of nervous ecstasy.*

Anything, or anyone, just so it is someone! Great God, think of the relief—the relief! Until this moment, the calumny that was all about me, dogging my footsteps, invading my home, seated at my table, stalking by my bed, pursuing me, asleep, awake—every minute of the day and night—until this moment, I could not reach it or lay hands on it. It was nothing—no one! Because it was *everyone*. But *now*, this subtle, elusive, poisonous mist—this will-o'-the-wisp that stung me, escaped, and mocked me—now it has taken a body, shape and being, whom I can lay hands on and hold face to face! It is no longer a ghost—It's a *man*—Alvarez! Do you wonder I am overjoyed?—Come, Severo!

[*Goes out quickly with his arm in* SEVERO'S; *their voices are heard, mingled with laughter, as they pass down the hall-way.*

BEAULIEU

[*Calling after* JULIAN.

God be with you—gallant gentleman. The other—

[*Pointing downward.*

Will be with Alvarez.

[*After a pause, to* PEPITO.

We've done it, my boy.

PEPITO

No—it's all right—Alvarez won't fight Julian—not until he's met Ernesto.

BEAULIEU

Are you sure?

PEPITO

Of *course*—it's the *code!*

BEAULIEU

Much he cares for the *code*—that blackguard!

PEPITO

[*With an air of authority.*

Oh, well, Captain—Alvarez may be blackguard, as you say, but for all that, he's *gentleman.* Why, can't you see? Suppose he allowed Julian to kill or disable him—that wouldn't be fair to Ernesto. He has the prior right.

BEAULIEU

[*Holding up a glass of sherry.*

Here's he'll make the most of it!

PEPITO

And if *not*—Julian can take care of himself. This Alvarez, you know what he is?—what they say in London—a cat! A bouncer!

BEAULIEU

Cad, Pepito, cad—and bounder—not bouncer!

PEPITO

You know what I mean—he boasts and blusters.

BEAULIEU

Yes, you've a lot here like that—boast and bluster, but, hang it! when they get a sword in their hand, they're as good as their word—and better.

PEPITO

He'll have to be—when Ernesto knows that Julian follows him—

BEAULIEU

He *mustn't* know.

PEPITO

But he's sure to learn—

BEAULIEU

After his own affair—well and good! But not one word now—would only unnerve him—excite him—

PEPITO

[*As if struck by an idea.*

Beaulieu—I don't care what people say—you're no fool!

BEAULIEU

Pretty idea! Thank you kindly—And if you'll accept it as *mere courtesy*, I'll return the compliment—provided you follow my counsel and say nothing to disturb Ernesto.—The poor fellow has more than his share, now—and for what? What has he done—?

PEPITO

Captain—I can speak with you frankly—you are our friend—and a man of the world—as I am.

[BEAULIEU *adjusts his monocle quizzingly and turns to* PEPITO, *who does the same.*

Yes, I have travelled—Ernesto, no—nor my

people—except in summer, to San Sebastian, for the sea-bath—but I have seen life—the high-life—the great world. I passed one whole winter in Havana—in my uncle's bank—before the Yankees came—with their narrow ideas and open plumbing—and I tell you, Ernesto and Teodora—

BEAULIEU

[*With uplifted hand, and turning away.*

If you please, I'd rather not.

PEPITO

No—it is nothing! Only they've not been—what you say in London—clever.—Why, with my own eyes, I've seen—

BEAULIEU

[*Stopping* PEPITO, *with a gesture.*

Well, no use telling me!—Because I never believe anything I don't see with my *own* two eyes—and then I only believe one-half of that, because—

[*Indicating his monocled eye.*

this one eye's a *blinker!*

PEPITO

Well,—they should have been prudent. One owes

that to one's friends.—Here, in Madrid, life is not varied—people are hard put for amusement —diversion—Yes, the bull-fight, opera, theatre, dance—but the same story, the year round. But the *gossip*, that is always new.

BEAULIEU, *interrupting*

There's been no ground for gossip—long as I've been in Madrid, I don't believe I've ever seen Donna Teodora and Ernesto alone, in public—yes, *once*, perhaps.

PEPITO

Precisely! But if a hundred persons saw them that once, it is just the same as if one person saw them a hundred times—or fifty persons twice—or twenty persons five times. And *they* run to tell their families—and *they*, in turn, tell the neighbours—and then *they* tell—

BEAULIEU

[*Hitting the table with his hand.*

They! They!

[*Rising.*

Do you know what 'they' stands for? It's the family-name of Ananias and Sapphira!—

Yes—it was the name on their door-plate and visiting cards. In the parish registry of their time, it read: 'Ananias and Sapphira *They.*' And when the Lord struck them down, in the midst of their last gigantic whopper—and you may be sure it was about some decent man and woman—the newspapers reported the sudden taking off of Mr. and Mrs. They—known to their friends as Ananias and Sapphira!

PEPITO

But *that* isn't in the Bible!

BEAULIEU

No—because the name is of such evil and malignant portent, the Good Book wouldn't repeat it—'They!' 'They!' By Jove, I never hear the word that I don't want to cross my fingers

[*Crosses his fingers.*

and repeat the Litany with an added clause—'Good Lord, deliver us from *They!*'

[ERNESTO *enters.*

ERNESTO

[*To* PEPITO.

Hello, boy!—You needn't have waited, Beaulieu.

BEAULIEU

Thought we might be of some service.

ERNESTO

No, thanks. Everything's arranged. It'll be all over in an hour.

[*Pulls the bell-cord.*

BEAULIEU

[*Noting* ERNESTO'S *calm manner.*

One good thing—you're cool about it.

ERNESTO

Why not? If I finish him, the world's better off—and the other way round, I'm better off.

BEAULIEU

In *that* mood, you'll be easy for him.

ERNESTO

[*Shaking his head, and with a grim smile.*

No!

BEAULIEU

Oh, I've seen him, at the fencing club, *watch* you as a snake watches a bird—and you never knew it!

ERNESTO

Good! Or I'd had to show him all I know.

BEAULIEU

[*Catching his meaning.*

Oh, I see! Pretty idea—and so Spanish!

ERNESTO

[*In a low tone to* GENARO *who enters.*

Genaro—some gentlemen will call presently, to arrange for the use of your *studio.*

GENARO

Yes, sir—they've already been here.

ERNESTO

Oh!—See the door from that corridor is locked.

GENARO

Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

BEAULIEU

Now, I suppose, you'd like to be alone.

ERNESTO

[*Looking at his watch.*

No hurry—some time until the seconds call for me.

[GENARO *re-enters.*

ERNESTO

[*To* GENARO.

I'll be going out presently, and shan't come back here again—they will come for my trunks—while I'm out—see they get to the station in good season for the night train to Cadiz.

GENARO

Yes, sir.—The night train to Cadiz.

[*Goes out.*

PEPITO

But—Ernesto—

ERNESTO

Yes.

PEPITO

If—if something—should happen?

ERNESTO

[*With his hands on* PEPITO'S *shoulders.*

Don't you worry, boy.

PEPITO

[*Shaking his head dubiously.*

H'm—h'm—he'll send you to the devil—if he can.

ERNESTO, *lightly*

Well, at the worst, I won't need my trunks there —they might just as well go on—

BEAULIEU

[*Suddenly, as if roused from thought.*

Damn it!—Why the deuce did you have to go there!

ERNESTO

Because, as you heard, I'd arranged to meet Moreno.

BEAULIEU

Yes, but *just* at that moment! Another minute, Alvarez had been gone from the place—and this wouldn't have happened!

ERNESTO

Yes, but this was *meant* to happen, and that one single minute Fate held free that it *should* hap-

pen! Think of it, Beaulieu, in all the infinite space of time, there was only one minute—one tick of the watch—for that encounter between Alvarez and me, and chance gave it to me! Without that, I'd have had to bear, all the rest of my life, the torturing thought, the bitter impotent rage, that he had hurt and humiliated me, until my senses reeled, while I stood helpless and unresisting, with lips locked and my hands bound! Can't you see, in what happened there, the determined purpose of Chance or Fate or whatever it may be, to end his infamies and bring him to account?—Why, my dear Beaulieu, if there be any power that orders human affairs for right and wrong, do you suppose a man like Alvarez is to go on his way of calculated evil—ruthless, brazen and *exultant*—to the end! Do you *doubt* there is one *appointed* moment when he must answer for his offence!—What sort of world would this be—would it be worth the making or worth the caring-for—if such a creature could defile fair names, could distort the very faith and candour of men and women to their shame and confusion and yet escape all reckoning with God or man?—No, Beaulieu, as you're my friend, don't you *regret* that one *blessed* moment that led me to Señor Alvarez. Whatever Fate may have in store for me to-morrow, to-day I know I stood in her good graces—that she means only well by me.

BEAULIEU

I hope you're right, but I'm never so sure about the *good intentions* of that Fate lady—I've seen her play some rather queer tricks upon mighty good chaps.

[*With a changed tone.*

And when—when is it to be?

ERNESTO

Four o'clock.

BEAULIEU

Out of town, of course.

ERNESTO

No—wouldn't be time for that—the seconds agreed on a room.

PEPITO

Not the Alcazar—where the quarrel—?

ERNESTO

No, here.

BEAULIEU

[*To* ERNESTO.

In this house?

ERNESTO

[*Crosses to door at the left.*

At the end of this corridor—

[*To* PEPITO.

where you got my fencing traps.

[*Opens the door.*

Large room, good light—and stairs leading from the court below—We'll be quite comfortable there. It's been used for the same purpose before.—Beaulieu, you can do me a service, if you will.

BEAULIEU

[*Comes to him.*

Anything in the world, old chap.

ERNESTO

By this time, Don Julian must have heard of the affair at the Alcazar.

BEAULIEU

Oh, surely.

ERNESTO

Go and find him, if you can—

[*Looks at his watch.*

At the Foreign Office or his house—assure him I didn't start the quarrel—and, above all—he likes you, you know—keep him in hand until this is over—don't let him out of your sight.—If nothing else, just talk to him.

BEAULIEU

If need be, I'll be *brilliant*—anything to keep matters straight.—Now tell me again—and you can't tell me too often—you're *sure* of yourself?

ERNESTO

I can only be sure I'll do my best.

BEAULIEU

Hang it, no!—the *best* isn't good enough—it's the *worst* that's needed for that scamp. Finish him, my boy—*finish* him—or else come so near it he won't know the difference for a month or two.

[*Holding out his hands.*

Now, good luck and God bless you!

ERNESTO

[*Rather sombrely.*

Good-bye.

BEAULIEU

Ugly word—I never say it. Au'voir—au'voir!
And you, Pepito—Au'voir!

[*Puts his fingers to his lips to indicate silence, and goes out.*

[GENARO *is heard, singing: he appears at the door as* BEAULIEU *goes out, and makes way for him.*

GENARO

[*Entering, to* ERNESTO.

Somebody to see you, sir.

ERNESTO

But I've no time, now.

GENARO

I said that, sir, but the lady insisted.

PEPITO

Trala! A lady?

GENARO

I shouldn't wonder, sir—she has no veil on.

ERNESTO

The lady's alone?

GENARO

Yes, sir—*I* should say alone—she has only her maid with her.

ERNESTO

I'll go below to see her.

[*Starts to go.*

GENARO

I beg pardon, sir—it's the music hour—there are many in the café—and the lady has been crying.

[ERNESTO *is obviously disturbed.*

PEPITO

No veil and crying—sounds promising.—Well, I'll be off.

[*To* GENARO.

What are you waiting for?

GENARO

Orders to show the lady in.

PEPITO

Why, don't you know your business better than that? You must always show a lady in, especially when she's crying—and, once she's in—no one else!

GENARO

[*To* ERNESTO.

Your orders, sir?

ERNESTO

Didn't you ask the lady's name?

GENARO

[*With a knowing grin.*

Not a custom of the house, sir—but *(suggestively)* perhaps, the lady of the letter.

ERNESTO

What letter?

GENARO

[*Crossing to the table.*

I put it there.

[*Takes the letter.*

Yes, here it is.

[*Gives* ERNESTO *the letter.*

Came just after you'd gone—she says she must see you.

ERNESTO

[*Glances nervously at letter and then at* PEPITO.

Yes, yes, of course—show the lady in.

[GENARO *goes out.*

PEPITO

Trala, aren't you clever! You're doing just right, Ernesto.

ERNESTO

You think—

PEPITO

The very thing!—making a diversion, as diplomats say. Beautiful! The quarrel with Alvarez over this *new* one. Good-bye and good luck! And whatever happens, Ernesto, I won't be far off.

[*Goes out quickly.*

ERNESTO

[*Opening the letter.*

Teodora!

[*Reads.*

I implore you do not quarrel with Julian! No matter what he may say or do—be patient with him! I entreat you—by our love for him—yours and mine—be patient with him. Remember, dear friend, my soul adores him—and he is so unhappy—and *I.*

TEODORA

[*Appearing at the door.*

I am not too late?

ERNESTO

Teodora!—You shouldn't have done this, Teo!

TEODORA

Never mind about me—now, it is you and Julian —Where is he? I must speak with him—and you.

ERNESTO

But to come here—and *alone!*

TEODORA

There was no other way—and I *had* to see you.

ERNESTO

But surely, Mercedes would have—

TEODORA

No, she refused—Severo forbids her to be seen with me in public, anywhere.

ERNESTO, *fiercely*

Severo!

TEODORA

That's what they've brought it to, Ernesto.

[*Pointing to the letter in* ERNESTO'S *hand.*

I waited for an answer—

ERNESTO

[*Indicating the letter.*

I just now have it.

TEODORA

[*Continues feverishly.*

I wanted your word—to assure me—but I could endure it no longer.

ERNESTO

But, Teodora, to come here! If you were seen—

TEODORA, *defiantly*

What of it? What could they say that they have not already said? I no longer care—nothing matters—only that you shall not fight.

ERNESTO, *protesting*

But, Teo, when you hear what happened!

TEODORA

[*Insisting commandingly.*

No, no, no—no matter—what happened—you shall not fight on *my account!*

ERNESTO

If you knew—the insult!

TEODORA

[*Pointing to the letter still in* ERNESTO'S *hand.*

But I warned you—implored you—

[*With pathos.*

to bear with him.

ERNESTO, *bewildered*

Julian—?

TEODORA

When Mercedes told me he'd come here—with Severo—who hates us—you and me—I knew what it meant. But you shall not fight for me. Oh, the shame of it!—*you and Julian!*—to seek each other's life—for *me!*

ERNESTO

But, Teo, we have no quarrel, Julian and I.

TEODORA

You promise me—your word of honour?

ERNESTO

Of course.

TEODORA

And you forgive—the insult?

ERNESTO

There's been none.

TEODORA

But you said just now—

ERNESTO

Alvarez—yes.

TEODORA

Alvarez! Despite Beaulieu's warning, you sought a quarrel with him?

ERNESTO

No—he forced the quarrel on me—wildly—in a frenzy—like a man drunk with hate. He knew I was leaving to-day—the thought that I might escape him, and that, once I had gone, there'd be no further excuse for his lies—maddened him!

TEODORA

Still, I forbid it—you shall not fight—for me!

ERNESTO

For a woman, then—any woman—held up to scorn—her name tossed from glass to glass—in a group of jeering ribalds—until every nook and corner echoed the insult—clear and insistent above the turmoil of a tippler's brawl.

TEODORA, *overwhelmed*

Great God! Ernesto, was it like that?

ERNESTO

[*With clenched fists and in tones of mingled horror and vengeance.*

Oh, Teodora, I only want the picture before me, when I face him!

TEODORA

[*Recovering herself.*

But the world will know it is for me—they'll ask why *you* defend my good name, and not Julian! —And you should have thought of that, Ernesto, you should have avoided the quarrel—

ERNESTO, *interrupting*

I tried.

TEODORA, *continuing*

At any cost of pride—by any trick—

ERNESTO

How I sought to avoid it—Beaulieu will tell you—till they threw it into my face—the insult.

TEODORA

But it was meant for Julian—and me. You have no right—to take his quarrel on yourself—

[*As if to clinch the matter.*

It would be—impertinence!

ERNESTO, *horrified*

Teodora!

TEODORA

[*Proudly and almost coldly.*

It is Julian's privilege—and his alone. It is for my husband—and none but him—to guard my good name.

ERNESTO

But, Teodora, a life must be staked against this man's—when swords cross, the issue is always uncertain. Alvarez' skill is proved and notorious—you know that?

TEODORA, *weakly*

Yes.

TEODORA

Well, then, if it must be Julian or me—

TEODORA, *falteringly*

Julian, or—you?

ERNESTO

Between his life and mine you will not hesitate?

[*They look at each other intently, and in silence.*

TEODORA

[*As if she has forced herself to a decision.*

Julian himself shall decide.

ERNESTO

But, Teo, think a moment—it was *I* who struck Alvarez—full in the face—before his friends and a hundred others.—He is *entitled* to a chance at my life. If I refuse to meet him he will kill me—and rightly so!

TEODORA

[*In a panic of apprehension.*

No, no, he shall not. No!—Let Julian decide, please—send for him—or, come—let us go to him.

[*Starts toward the door, stops suddenly, listens.*

Why—I thought I heard Julian's voice.

[*A door is heard to close.*

ERNESTO

No one for me.

TEODORA

Shall we not go?

ERNESTO

[*Glancing at the clock.*

There is no time now.

TEODORA

[*Not understanding.*

Why? No time? You mean—you fight Alvarez to-day?

ERNESTO

At four o'clock.

TEODORA

[*As if beside herself.*

No! I forbid you—for the last time—I for—

[*Voices are heard.*

Who is that. There is someone for you, surely.

ERNESTO

It is almost time for them.

[*Goes to the door and looks out.*

TEODORA

[*In tones of fright.*

Your seconds?—Captain Beaulieu and—

ERNESTO

[*Interrupting, and shaking his head.*

The Marquis Acedo and Mario Sanches.

TEODORA

They! Alvarez' friends!

ERNESTO

The first to hand—

TEODORA

[*Panic-stricken.*

If *they* saw me here!

ERNESTO

[*As if to calm her.*

No, no—it may not be they.

[*The voices are heard again.*

And—even if they saw you—

TEODORA, *brokenly*

Ernesto, my courage is gone—quite gone—I tremble like a leaf!

[*There is a noise of knocking; then the voices again.*

ERNESTO, *listening*

That can't be they!

[*Goes to the door of the corridor.*

It is here!

TEODORA

Julian's voice—it *is!*—And Severo's!

[*The noise is repeated, with the sound of a knob being turned.*

[TEODORA *and* ERNESTO *stand silent, bewildered.*

[*A voice is heard beyond the closed door, crying: 'Open—unbolt the door!'*

PEPITO

[*From outside.*

Open, Ernesto! Ernesto!

TEODORA

Pepito! It's Pepito!

[*Looks about, as if to rush off.*

ERNESTO

[*Stopping her, and opening the door leading to the corridor.*

No, no, no—remain where you are! It's only Pepito.—Stay, Teo!

[*Disappears into the corridor. As he opens the door at the other end of the corridor, voices are heard in a confused babble.*
[TEODORA, *frightened, distracted, rushes toward the door at the right. As she opens it, there is heard the music from the café, the buzz of voices, and laughter; and then* BEAULIEU'S *voice in controversy with* GENARO.

BEAULIEU

[*Speaking outside.*

Never mind, I know the way—

GENARO, *protestingly*

But there's someone with him—

BEAULIEU

[*Coming nearer.*

Nonsense, I only just left him—

TEODORA

[*Beside herself.*

Captain Beaulieu!

[*Pauses for an instant, as if at bay. Then, as the voices in the corridor draw nearer, and the buzz from the café increases, in a flash of panic she rushes into the bedroom.*

[ERNESTO *re-enters from the corridor, followed by* PEPITO.

PEPITO

You're alone?

ERNESTO

[*Glancing about.*

Yes, yes.

[*To himself.*

Thank God!

BEAULIEU

[*Entering, excitedly.*

Julian came here, with your seconds!

[*In a tone of horror.*

What's the matter with you fellows?—What's happened?

ERNESTO, *fiercely*

This boy betrayed me—told them everything!

BEAULIEU

But didn't mean to—they made him.

PEPITO

Julian flew to Alvarez' house—dragged him here with your seconds—forced him to fight—and they fought like fiends!

BEAULIEU

And Julian—hurt?

PEPITO

Mortally, I believe.

[*Steps are heard in the corridor.*

They're bringing him here.

JULIAN

[*Entering from the corridor, and warding off* SEVERO, *who moves as if to support him.*

No, no—let me be.—Close that door.—That rat shan't see how he scratched me!

[SEVERO *goes into the corridor.*

ERNESTO

[*With an appealing gesture.*

Julian, that was *my* work!—You had no right to take it from me.

JULIAN

Never mind, my boy.—It is still for you to do—and better than I—

[*Winces and supports himself against the cabinet near the door.*

SEVERO, *re-entering*

Come, Julian, you must lie down—

ERNESTO

Yes, in here.

[*Goes to the bedroom door, opens it, and sees to his astonishment that* TEODORA *is there. He closes the door abruptly, and stands with his back to it, obviously panic-stricken, and as if to bar entrance.*

JULIAN

[*Takes a step toward the door; stops; and gasps, as if in great pain.*

One minute, please—I can't—Ernesto—

[ERNESTO *returns as if to help him. They move toward the bedroom, until they reach a large chair near the door.*

JULIAN

[*Clutching the chair.*

Ernesto—Here—for a moment.

[*Faintly.*

Yes—that's better—

[*Pauses.*

Now—Ernesto—

[*Growing weaker.*

Send—for—for—Teo.

ERNESTO, *aghast*

Teo!

[*As if to re-assure him.*

Julian, you're not—

JULIAN

[*With his hand to his heart, gaspingly.*

I'm afraid—yes—*you* go—bring her—to me—

Don't— tell—her—I'm—

[*To* SEVERO.

Let me lie down.

[*Takes a step toward the bedroom, but utters a piercing cry of pain, and collapses into the chair.*

TEODORA

[*Rushing from the room, impelled by* JULIAN'S *cry.*

Julian!

[JULIAN *pulls himself together at the sound of her voice, and stares at her as if dazed.*

TEODORA

[*On her knees before him.*

Julian, don't you see me?—Teo, your wife!

JULIAN

[*Staring, as if into space, and bewildered.*

My wife—here—already—no!

SEVERO

Yes, brother, your wife!

[*Pointing to* ERNESTO.

And your friend!

"Yes, brother, your wife! and your friend!"

JULIAN

[*Looking about, as if to make sure where he is.*

Here!

[*Pause.*

Why—are you—here?

TEODORA

To save you from this—I meant—

ERNESTO, *eagerly*

Yes!—she feared *we* would fight—you and I!—

SEVERO

[*Interrupting savagely.*

Then why hide?—

[*Pointing to the bedroom.*

hide—like guilty things?

TEODORA

[*In agonized protest.*

No, no, no, Julian!

JULIAN

[*Pushing her aside.*

You were right, Severo—a rendezvous!

ERNESTO

[*Frantically, as he offers* TEODORA'S *letter.*

Here, Julian, you will *see* the *truth!*

SEVERO

[*To* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA.

Oh, he sees—yes, *now* he sees!

JULIAN

[*Half rises from the chair, with hands to eyes, as if rubbing away a mist.*

No, no—Phantoms! Only phantoms!

[*Collapses into the chair.*

SEVERO, *wildly*

No, *not* phantoms! Traitors—flesh-and-blood traitors!

[*Advancing rapidly to* ERNESTO.

For this day's work I'll—

[*Moves as if to strike* ERNESTO.

ERNESTO

[*Seizing* SEVERO'S *uplifted hand, and holding it down.*

Yes, yes—of course—later, if you like—you may kill me, and with my last breath I'll bless you for it—but, first, in God's name—let me meet Alvarez!

[*Goes quickly into the corridor, followed by* BEAULIEU.

CURTAIN

ACT III

THE SCENE *is again the drawing-room in* DON JULIAN'S *house, a few hours after the event of the previous act. Only the torchère, by the piano, and the hall-lantern are lighted. The curtains in the archway leading to the balcony are drawn together.*

[*As the curtain rises,* PEPITO *enters, slowly, from* JULIAN'S *room.*

SERVANT

[*Entering silently, announces in almost a whisper.*

Captain Beaulieu.

PEPITO, *nodding*

Yes.

[SERVANT *opens the door leading to the hall.*
[BEAULIEU *enters.*

BEAULIEU

How's the good man?

PEPITO, *dubiously*

Hard to tell.

BEAULIEU

Not the worst!

PEPITO

Julian says it's a mere scratch.

BEAULIEU

What does the surgeon say—Any chance?

PEPITO

Yes, if he can be kept quiet. Will come through all right, the surgeon says. But he won't even lie on the couch; starts up every few minutes, as if from a nightmare; stalks about the room, pretending he isn't really hurt. And keeps asking for Teo!

BEAULIEU, *surprised*

Why, isn't Donna Teodora with him?

PEPITO, *meaningly*

What! after—her visit—to Ernesto?

BEAULIEU, *warningly*

By Jove, if you people aren't careful, you'll do for Julian what Alvarez didn't.

PEPITO

Well, whatever happens, my father will square the score with *him.*

[*Makes a gesture.*

He'll run him through!

BEAULIEU

Pretty idea!—But the account's already squared—and wiped off the slate!

PEPITO, *eagerly*

Ernesto?

BEAULIEU

Beautiful piece of work!—May cost me my *congé*, but I wouldn't have missed it for an Embassy.

PEPITO

But not the—*finish?*

BEAULIEU

If Alvarez gets over it, it's because the devil doesn't want his company. At any rate, he'll never fight again. That wonderful arm of his is out of business.

[MERCEDES *enters from the door at the right.*

PEPITO

[*Greeting her joyously.*

Mother, dear, isn't it splendid!—Alvarez can't harm Papa! He's done for!

MERCEDES

[*Looking at* BEAULIEU *for explanation.*

Don Ernesto?

BEAULIEU

[*Nods 'yes'.*

They fought at four—precisely as they'd arranged.

PEPITO

[*At the balcony windows, drawing back the curtains, so as to disclose Alvarez' house, showing dark in the brightly lit avenue.*

See, mother, not a light over there, at Alvarez'—dark as a house of mourning.

[*Gleefully.*

I'll go tell father.

MERCEDES

[*Stopping him as he reaches the door.*

And say I wish to see him—now.

[PEPITO *goes out.*

BEAULIEU

[*To* MERCEDES.

And the Donna Teodora?

MERCEDES

We're not to speak her name—my husband *forbids*—to strangers.

BEAULIEU

But I count myself an old friend—and I bring a message.

MERCEDES, *eagerly*

Then he's gone?

BEAULIEU

No.—And he won't go—until he's seen Donna Teodora and Julian.

MERCEDES

Has the man lost his wits?

BEAULIEU

The very question I asked *him*.

MERCEDES

If he shows himself here—I don't know what might happen.

BEAULIEU

I *do!* So I'm going to keep close to him, until he's safely off on his journey.—The poor fellow is all alone.—His life since he's been in Madrid was lived in this house. There's no one out there he can turn to. And he's beside himself—more than half mad—desperate enough for anything. —Don't drive him one step further—receive him when he calls—

MERCEDES

But if it were known—that he'd come here?

BEAULIEU

Excellent diplomacy!—the best possible way to end this—this—

[*Hesitates.*

tragedy of gossip! And, after all, why shouldn't it be known—why shouldn't he come here?

MERCEDES, *wonderingly*

Why?

BEAULIEU

Yes.

MERCEDES

And you don't believe—he and Teodora—?

BEAULIEU, *interrupting*

No more than you and I—

[MERCEDES *indicates her amazement at the awkward comparison.*

BEAULIEU

[*Quickly correcting himself.*

I beg your pardon, dear lady, but I want to put it convincingly.

[SEVERO *is heard talking to* PEPITO.

Now, if you can persuade—Don Severo—

[*Points to the door to indicate* SEVERO; *then turns as if to go out.*

MERCEDES

[*Stopping him.*

Wait—judge for yourself.

SEVERO

[*At the door.*

What is it?

MERCEDES

Severo—Teodora begs to see Julian—

SEVERO

[*Advancing to Mercedes and speaking sharply.*

You've disobeyed my orders!

MERCEDES

No—I've not spoken with her—I *listened* to her pleadings.

SEVERO

[*Turning as if to go.*

I'll not listen—I want none of them—

MERCEDES

She asks only to say good-bye to Julian;—then she will go.

SEVERO

She'll go *without* that—and *now*—I told you what to do—

MERCEDES

I cannot send that poor, distracted creature from this house at such a moment.—Where could she go, that she wouldn't be pointed out—after the scandal of to-day?—Where could she find welcome, or even shelter?

SEVERO, *deliberately*

At her lover's—where we surprised her—

BEAULIEU, *angrily*

Don Severo!—

[*Apologetically.*

I beg your pardon for intervening—in this purely family matter—but circumstances have made me a part of it, as it were—and I've always been proud of Don Julian's friendship—and his wife's —Now, I know nothing of Donna Teodora's—

[*Hesitating.*

errand—to-day; but if you would take the trouble to learn the *truth*, you'd regret what you just said—I'd stake my life on it!

MERCEDES, *timidly*

We *may* be doing her wrong—

SEVERO

[*As if amazed.*

What!

MERCEDES

It is *possible*—just possible—

SEVERO, *interrupting*

Now you defend her! That's the woman of you!

MERCEDES

No, I *don't* defend her—I believe as you do—her sin is too mean—her guilt too clear—but it's not for *me* to *punish* her.

[SEVERO *turns away impatiently.*

That is God's business.

SEVERO, *fiercely*

It *was* Julian's—now it is *mine.*

BEAULIEU

[*With a shrug.*

Of course, if you think you can do it better!

SEVERO

No one shall intercede here!—My brother casts this woman from his heart—

MERCEDES

That's as it should be! And you, his kinsman, cast her from the house she has dishonoured—*that's* as it should be. But when that is done, she is no

longer the sinning wife, but only a woman, helpless, sorrowing and alone—And I must give her what I can of comfort and pity.

BEAULIEU

[*To himself.*

That's the woman of it, too!

PEPITO

[*With outstretched hands, appealingly.*

Yes, father, if you could but see Teodora, you would pity—

SEVERO, *bitterly*

Pity! Pity! I have none—only for him—

[*With a sudden change, to a tone quivering with tears.*

Oh, Pepito, my brother—my poor, dear brother.

[*Buries his head on* PEPITO'S *shoulder.*

MERCEDES, *tenderly*

Severo—does not Teo—also love Julian?

SEVERO

[*Turns and faces her; speaks savagely.*

No! No!

[*Goes to the door at left; pauses, pointing to Julian's room.*

Let her not cross that threshold!

[*Goes out.*

BEAULIEU

[*Looking after* SEVERO.

Donna Mercedes, your husband is—

MERCEDES

[*Proudly, and in a chilling tone.*

Yes, Captain Beaulieu?

BEAULIEU

[*With a shrug.*

A Spaniard, I suppose.

[SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT, *announcing*

Don Ernesto.

MERCEDES

We receive no one.

[SERVANT *hesitates, as if waiting for further orders.*

BEAULIEU

[*To* MERCEDES.

I beg of you—

[MERCEDES, *with a gesture indicating* SEVERO.

You heard—

[*To* SERVANT.

Do not admit him.

[SERVANT *starts to go out.*

BEAULIEU

That won't stop him.—He's in the mood when nothing can.

PEPITO

I'll go talk to him—

[MERCEDES *stops him with a gesture.*

SERVANT

Don Ernesto insists, Madame.

MERCEDES

He shall not enter this house!

SERVANT

He has already done so, Madame.

PEPITO, *advancing*

Then you should have—

SERVANT, *bowing*

I thought it unwise, Sir.

PEPITO

[*With a threatening movement.*

Then *I* shall—

SERVANT

Beg pardon, Sir, I still think it unwise, Sir.

MERCEDES

[*With growing anger.*

Tell him to leave and if he will not—

[ERNESTO *appears at the door and brushes by* SERVANT.

PEPITO

[*Finishing the sentence.*

Show him in.

SERVANT, *announcing*

Don Ernesto.

BEAULIEU

[*Tapping* PEPITO *on the shoulder approvingly.*

Pretty idea!

[ERNESTO *comes into the room; he has his hat in his hand, and over his arm carries a long travelling-cape.*

MERCEDES

[*To* ERNESTO.

The servants were ordered—

ERNESTO, *excitedly*

Don't blame them—they were as rude as—anyone could wish.—Now that I'm in—you'll please have them announce me to Teodora.

MERCEDES

That is impossible, Ernesto!

ERNESTO

Why?

MERCEDES

If, just now, you'd heard Severo—

PEPITO, *nodding*

Yes.

ERNESTO

Severo is nothing to me—I don't know there is such a man—And well for him, perhaps!—In my world—to-night—there are only three beings—Julian, Teodora and I—And nothing shall come between them and me—not Fate itself!

PEPITO, *appeasingly*

But, see, Ernesto—the state you're in—you'd consider nothing—not your life nor anyone else's.

ERNESTO

Because, Pepito—I've lost everything that makes life *worth* considering—And for no fault of my own—Honour, friendship, love—all taken from me—and for nothing, '*really nothing*,' as he says—

MERCEDES

Careful, Ernesto—if Severo should hear!

ERNESTO

Oh, he *will* hear—enough!—Beaulieu knows! The

door barred to me won't shut out those thousand tongues—

MERCEDES

They know—already?

BEAULIEU

They *think* they know—everything—everywhere.

ERNESTO

And everywhere it's different! And nowhere the truth! Teodora jealous of another woman, they say—made Julian challenge me. They had *that* story from the inn-keeper!—Julian surprised his wife in my room—some declare—and I killed him before her eyes.—Others, again, raise me from the rank of mere assassin and say we fought like loyal gentlemen—Julian and I!—A few have the tale—*accurately*—Oh, yes! from Alvarez' seconds—I arrived on the scene late—not through accident or fear—but because I preferred to remain in Teodora's arms—

MERCEDES

[*Turning toward* BEAULIEU *as if for corroboration.*

Oh, no!

[BEAULIEU *nods 'yes.'*

ERNESTO

Yes, to such figures they can transform an innocent woman and two men who worship her, with love, with reverence, once they begin spattering their mud of slander.—And from such tales I am to flee, like a thief in the night, not daring even to look behind—

[*In a tone of decisive command.*

Bring Teodora here—or take me to her!

PEPITO

[*Starting for the door.*

Yes, mother.

MERCEDES

[*Stopping* PEPITO.

Wait.—Ernesto, will that content you?

ERNESTO

Yes—

[*Then, as if suspecting what is in her mind.*

but—I—

MERCEDES

You will go, in peace?

ERNESTO

And not see—Julian?

MERCEDES

No—not Julian.

ERNESTO

Why—I—

BEAULIEU, *persuasively*

If Donna Teodora so wishes?

ERNESTO, *decisively*

Yes—if Teodora so wishes.

[*Appealing, to* PEPITO.

Now, then, Pepito.

[PEPITO *looks to* MERCEDES *for consent.*

MERCEDES, *nodding*

Say, only, I wish to see her.

[PEPITO *goes out.*

[*To* ERNESTO.

You will let me speak with her first?

ERNESTO

Yes.

MERCEDES

Alone?

ERNESTO

Yes.

MERCEDES

And you will do as she decides is best?

ERNESTO, *nervously*

Yes—yes—

MERCEDES

Your promise—before Captain Beaulieu—

ERNESTO, *wildly*

Yes, yes, yes!—anything—anything—just so I see her!

MERCEDES

[*Pointing to the balcony.*

Wait out there until I call you.

[ERNESTO *goes out to the balcony with* BEAULIEU.

PEPITO, *re-entering*

She is here.

MERCEDES

[*With a nod toward* ERNESTO.

You didn't tell her—?

PEPITO

No—only that you wished to see her.

[BEAULIEU *re-enters.*

BEAULIEU

[*Taking* PEPITO'S *arm.*

Come, Pepito, we'll reason with him.

[*Goes out with* PEPITO.

TEODORA

[*Entering quickly.*

Julian—he is worse?

MERCEDES

No—a little better—possibly.

TEODORA

You're telling me the truth?

[MERCEDES *nods.*

Then I may go to him?

[MERCEDES *does not answer.*

Mercedes—you asked Severo?—

"The truth!—Why did you go there to-day?"

MERCEDES

[*Nodding 'yes.'*

Yes, but he—refuses.

TEODORA

[*With fire.*

He *dare* not refuse—he must not—

MERCEDES

Teodora, Julian's life hangs by a thread.—He believes that you and Ernesto—

TEODORA, *interrupting*

No, no,—it is *Severo* who believes—and who stands between Julian and me—so the truth may not reach him.

MERCEDES, *sceptically*

The truth!—Why did you go there to-day?

TEODORA

You told me Julian had gone—that they might fight—and an awful dread—lest harm come to him—

MERCEDES, *cynically*

Julian?

TEODORA

Of course, Julian.

MERCEDES, *sharply*

And the other—there was no thought of *him?*

TEODORA

[*As if trying to fathom her own thoughts.*

Why—I don't know—

MERCEDES, *angrily*

Oh, yes, you do—you know!

TEODORA

[*As if suddenly awakened to the truth.*

Yes! You are right—I feared for him, too—because—

MERCEDES, *incredulously*

Oh, yes—

TEODORA

No!—Only because the thought that those two men—my husband and—the other—would fight over me—appalled me—*sickened* me—soul and body—I am not of those women for whom men may slay each other—like raging beasts—why,

even with Alvarez—that monster!—I forbade Ernesto to fight—but now—*now*—he—shall—kill—him!

MERCEDES

It is already done, Teodora.

TEODORA

[*With a smile.*

You are certain?

[MERCEDES *nods 'yes.'*

[*Exultantly.*

I knew he would! I *knew* he would!

MERCEDES

You say that as if—as if—

TEODORA

What! You *still* mistrust me?

MERCEDES

But see how proud—

TEODORA

Of his courage, yes—his skill—his life, staked for Julian!—

MERCEDES

And *you!* He fought for *you.*

TEODORA

No, not for *me*—for a woman—struck in the face, in his presence, by words more cowardly than the clenched fist. What man would not do the same?—

[*With a glow of admiration.*

What man like Ernesto?

[*Turns from* MERCEDES.

MERCEDES

[*Following her.*

See how you betray yourself—

TEODORA

Betray!

MERCEDES

Yes! Every tone you utter—the flush of your cheek—your lips tremble—your eyes soften with tears if you but speak his name.—Teodora, you love him!

TEODORA

No, no, no, a thousand times no!—

MERCEDES

[*Looking at her closely.*

Guard yourself, well, I warn you—your steps falter.

TEODORA

And you wait to see me fall!

[MERCEDES *makes a sign of protest.*

You urge and push me to the very trap you pretend to warn me of; else why do you din into my ears this lie—this lie—'You love him'—'you love him.'—Little by little, oh, so cunningly, so fiendishly, you try to convince me that love for Julian is going from my heart, and that love for another—try as I will to fight it—is taking its place.—It is from *you* I must guard myself—and not from him for whom I have never known one single, passing thought but honest friendship.

MERCEDES

Is that the truth?

TEODORA

I have never lied! It is the truth *now*. But God knows what you all may do with your ceaseless suspicion—warning us of danger we never dreamed of—weaving about us a mist of doubt and self-

distrust through which we no longer see our own souls clearly.

[*Fiercely.*

Keep on with this lie, Mercedes, and in the end you may distort the lie into truth!

MERCEDES

[*Triumphantly, turning from her.*

You see, you're not certain of yourself!

TEODORA

Indeed I am—

MERCEDES

[*Coming back to her.*

Of him, too?

TEODORA

Yes.

MERCEDES

You wouldn't say so, if you'd seen him just now—and heard him.

TEODORA

Where?

MERCEDES

Here.—Every word and look declared the truth.—
He loves you!

TEODORA

[*Protesting wildly.*

No, no, no!

MERCEDES

If you'd heard him—you wouldn't doubt—

TEODORA

Then well for him I didn't!—He's gone?

MERCEDES

He's waiting for you—out there.

TEODORA

[*Takes a step toward the balcony, then turns.*

No! Tell him to leave here. He's done harm enough in this house. Tell him to be off—I want never to see him again.

MERCEDES, *deliberately*

If you don't love him, you'll tell him that with your own lips.

TEODORA

That I will—and you shall see how I tell him.

[MERCEDES *goes to the balcony-door and beckons* ERNESTO *to enter.*

MERCEDES

[*To* ERNESTO.

You forced your way into this house against my orders—you insisted on seeing Donna Teodora against my advice—I trust her to make you regret it.

[*There is an awkward pause,* ERNESTO *obviously waiting for* MERCEDES *to leave.*

ERNESTO

Better, then, between Teodora and me.

MERCEDES

[*Making no sign of going.*

For what Teodora has to say to you—

ERNESTO, *interrupting*

But for what I have to say to Teodora—

[*With a bow as if dismissing* MERCEDES.

If you please—

MERCEDES

[*Appealing to* TEODORA.

Teodora?

ERNESTO

Alone, Teodora—you and I.

TEODORA

[*After a slight hesitation.*

Let it be as he wishes.

MERCEDES, *accusingly*

You are as wax in his hands.

TEODORA

You shall see!

[MERCEDES *goes out.*

TEODORA

Don Ernesto, I wish you to leave this house, at once!

ERNESTO

[*As if bewildered.*

So that was her plan!—*You* to show me the door! But not your own free will, Teodora?

TEODORA

Absolutely—I wish you to go—we must never see each other—again.

ERNESTO

Yes, yes, of course—that must be, I know—

[*Appealingly.*

but, Teodora, not this way—not this way!

TEODORA

[*In a softer tone.*

Surely, you must understand. . . .

ERNESTO

That my very presence is hateful to you, yes—and that I must seem the evil genius of your house—but don't drive me out—till I've seen Julian—spoken with him.

TEODORA, *excitedly*

Julian! No—that cannot be.

ERNESTO

For just one word of forgiveness—a hand-clasp of farewell.

TEODORA

No, no, no—you may not go to Julian.

ERNESTO

Teodora—

[*Pointing to* JULIAN'S *door.*

To leave him, forever—this way—I'm not a coward—and I've learned to suffer, but I can't face that—I *can't!*

[*Starts toward* JULIAN'S *door.*

TEODORA

[*Stopping him.*

I forbid you!

ERNESTO

You forbid! They knew, they knew I'd obey—made me promise.—Then, you, Teodora—you will go—and bring me word—only one word, of Julian's faith.

TEODORA

[*Stands with lowered head as if ashamed to answer.*

No—no—I—

ERNESTO

You refuse?—Teodora, even though you hate me —have pity—pity!

TEODORA

Yes, and you, too, for me. If you may not cross that threshold, no more may *I*—

ERNESTO, *amazed*

Teo!

TEODORA

They bar me from him, as though my touch were poison.

ERNESTO

Who does this—who—Severo?

TEODORA

Yes, Severo.

ERNESTO, *tensely*

We shall see—we shall see!

[*Takes her hand.*

Come.

TEODORA

[*Drawing her hand away quickly.*

What would you do?—

ERNESTO

To Julian—you and I—

TEODORA, *feverishly*

No, no, no—it would kill him—they say.

ERNESTO, *insisting*

No—but their lies, that torture and poison him, may! We'll give him new strength and courage, with the truth.

TEODORA

[*Drawing away from him, shaking her head sadly.*

He will not believe—he would not listen.

ERNESTO

[*With increasing fevour.*

He must believe! Though no word be spoken—he'll *see* the truth. Come, Teodora, everything else, I yield—I'll obey—but let me not go from here till—

[*On half bended knee.*

I implore you—I entreat you—

[*At full height, and with changed tone.*

I *command* you—

[*As* ERNESTO *utters this impassioned plea to* TEODORA, SEVERO *appears at the door which leads to* JULIAN'S *room.*

SEVERO

You wretched—

[*Advances threateningly to* ERNESTO.

Who dared let you enter?

ERNESTO

No one—I forced my way in. Don Severo, I wish—

SEVERO, *interrupting*

To complete your perfidy!—You see what has come from—

ERNESTO

'From nothing—really nothing!' That I will prove to Julian, if I must fight at every step to reach him. For see him, I shall.

[ERNESTO *makes two or three steps towards* JULIAN'S *door;* SEVERO *posts himself before the door as if to bar the way.*

SEVERO

Be off! I counsel you—go!

ERNESTO, *decisively*

Not till I've seen Julian—*spoken* with him—

SEVERO

Why? With what purpose? To finish the work Alvarez began for you? The grim spectre stalks too slowly, eh?

[ERNESTO *makes a gesture of protest.*

Your every heart-throb bids him Hurry! hurry! hurry!—So eager are you two for each other's arms.

ERNESTO

[*After a pause.*

I'll not answer you in kind—here—now. Your grief—your great love for Julian, excuses much. —Deal with me as you will—but this unhappy woman you must show, at least, pity.

SEVERO

[*Going to the bell at left.*

Her and you, I show only—

[*With a gesture of dismissal.*

The door! Go—or I'll—

[*Rings.*

ERNESTO

When I've seen Julian.

SERVANT

[*Entering, to* SEVERO.

Orders, sir?

TEODORA, *quietly*

No—a mistake—Don Severo has no orders to give—

[SERVANT *goes out.*

Here.

[*To* SEVERO.

So long as Julian lives, I am mistress of this house.

[*To* ERNESTO.

Remain.

SEVERO

You set your authority against mine—in this house you've dragged down to disgrace!—You forget you remain under this roof—by my sufferance—and Mercedes' plea for you.—You are mistress

here, indeed!—Well, not only does *he* go, but he takes you with him, you—

[*Utters a word that only* TEODORA *hears.*

TEODORA

[*Recoiling, as from a blow, and in tones of mingled horror and anguish.*

Oh, Julian!—

[*Buries her face in her hands.*

SEVERO

Now, will you go?

ERNESTO

When, on bended knee, you ask her pardon.

[*Seizes* SEVERO *as if to bring him to his knees.*

That word should be your last.—On your knees —

TEODORA

[*Coming between them and interceding.*

No, no, no, no—Julian will hear—please—

[ERNESTO *throws* SEVERO *to one side, as he releases him.*

[TEODORA *leads* ERNESTO *away from* SEVERO, *pleading with him.*

I beg of you—Ernesto—go—please go—

ERNESTO, *decisively*

No—not until I've seen Julian—

JULIAN

[*Speaking in his room.*

Let me go—I hear them—I tell you—

MERCEDES

[*She is heard speaking to* JULIAN, *in his room.*

No—you must not—

[JULIAN *enters, followed by* MERCEDES. *He is deadly pale; his eyes glitter with fever.* MERCEDES *makes one last effort to restrain him. He pushes her aside, rather brusquely.*

[BEAULIEU *and* PEPITO *re-enter from the balcony.*

JULIAN

Let me go, I say—

[*Advances a few steps, glaring at* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO, *who stand side by side, their eyes fixed on* JULIAN.

JULIAN, *bitterly*

Together—as usual!—I knew I heard them—

[*To* MERCEDES.

You said not!

[*Rather peevishly.*

Why does everyone lie to me?—Where are they going? Who stopped you—you traitors! You accursed—

[*Takes a step toward them, threateningly, but almost collapses, and leans for support against the piano.*

SEVERO

[*Hastening to his assistance.*

Julian—dear brother—

JULIAN, *tenderly*

Ah, Severo, *you* are true to me—aren't you? They broke faith with me, didn't they?—Tricked me!—Wasn't hard, though, was it?—with my trust—my poor, blind trust.—And look—

[*Points feebly at them.*

together—as always—*together!*

[ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *move apart instantly.*

And they take care—don't they?—good care—to keep out of—my reach.

[TEODORA *takes one step toward him—slowly, shrinkingly—and then stops.*

Nearer! Nearer!

[TEODORA *stretches out her hands appealingly, but does not approach him.*

TEODORA

Julian!

JULIAN

[*With a gesture of command.*

Come here! Here! I order you. In my arms!

[TEODORA *rushes forward and throws herself into* JULIAN'S *arms. He clasps her frantically. In triumphant tones to the others.*

You see—she is mine! For all you may say—she is mine!

[*To* TEODORA, *caressing her.*

Tell me—you're mine?

TEODORA

Yes, Julian.

JULIAN

[*Holding her at half-arm's length, and looking at her intently.*

You lie—you lie!

TEODORA

No!

JULIAN

[*Draws her again to him.*

I could crush you—stifle you—as you deserve—

SEVERO

Yes—a thousand times.

JULIAN

But I look at her—*I look at her*—and—it was always so—I'm weak.

[*With a sudden outburst, and pulling himself together.*

Besides—

[*Pointing to* ERNESTO.

There's the culprit—the *real* traitor—

[*With a commanding gesture.*

Here! Nearer!

[ERNESTO *goes to him.*

Confess—you betrayed me—

ERNESTO

[*Deliberately—almost coldly.*

No, Julian.

JULIAN

You dare deny—without blush or falter—what the whole world says?

ERNESTO

The world lies, Julian—mine's the truth! I swear it!

JULIAN

By what?

ERNESTO

On my honour—

JULIAN

[*Interrupting, with bitter irony.*

His honour!

[*To the others.*

You hear?—his—precious—honour!

ERNESTO

Then, by my father's—

JULIAN, *fiercely*

Silent!—I forbid you to sully my friend's name—as you sullied mine—you two.

ERNESTO

By what oath, then, oh, Julian, my more than brother, by what *sacred*—

[JULIAN *makes a gesture for silence, and* ERNESTO *turns to* TEODORA.

Teodora, what can we do?—to prove to him?

JULIAN

[*To* SEVERO.

See, they take counsel of each other, openly—under my very eyes.—No more need of stealthy messages—letters sealed—

ERNESTO

[*With a startled look at* TEODORA.

Tell him, Teo, what you wrote.

JULIAN

Oh, I know—the rendezvous—arranged—his rooms—

[*To* SEVERO.

You were right, brother—we should have read—

ERNESTO

Oh, if you only had—

[*Appealing to* TEODORA.

Teodora, tell him—

JULIAN

[*Silencing them.*

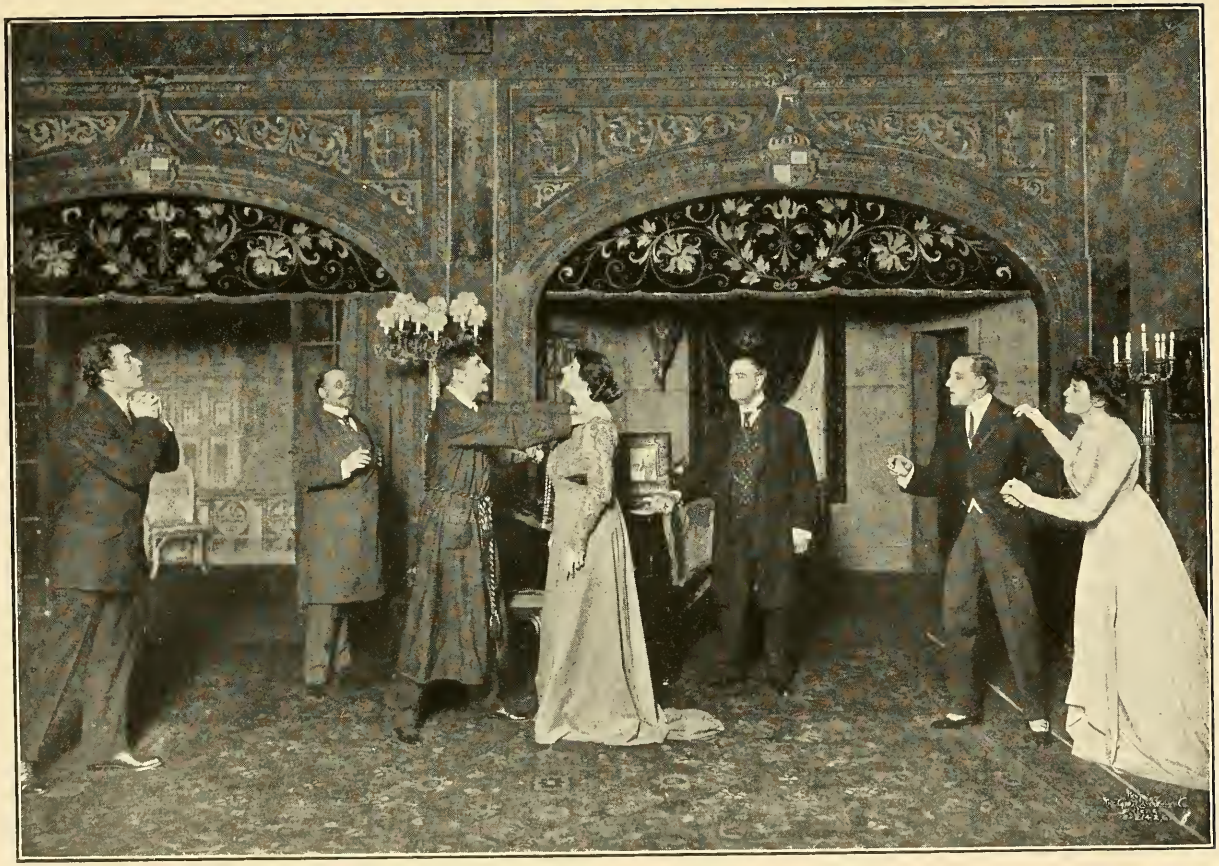
Lies—more lies? A cypher! A lover's code! Oh, I see all so clearly now—

[*Puts his hand to his eyes as if clearing his vision.*

TEODORA

[*Caressing* JULIAN.

No, no, Julian—the mists of fever blind you!



"You did betray me—you two—confess!"

JULIAN

[*With growing wrath.*

There was no fever, then—when I found you—with him.—The truth!—You *did* betray me—you two—confess!

TEODORA

[*Looking* JULIAN *straight in the eye.*

Julian, could my hand rest in yours without a tremour—could my eyes meet yours—thus?

JULIAN

[*Pushing her away.*

Yes—because you are shameless—*wanton*—in your guilt.

[TEODORA *in despair turns and faces* ERNESTO; *they exchange glances of helpless appeal.* JULIAN *follows their mutual glance with frenzied intentness.*

[*Wildly.*

See! How love lights her eye when she turns to *him*—and the gleam in his—

[*Puts his hand on* ERNESTO'S *eye.*

Not from tears.

[*Seizes* ERNESTO'S *wrist fiercely.*

Confess!

ERNESTO

[*Almost coldly.*

To a lie—*no*, Julian!

JULIAN

[*Raising his arm threateningly.*

For *that* lie, then, I'll kill you.

ERNESTO

[*On bended knee.*

Kill me, yes, Julian, but first forgive me!

JULIAN

That's confession—to ask forgiveness!

ERNESTO

For all your woe and pain—forgive me! Then—

JULIAN

No, you shan't escape conscience that way.—Live

—you must live—and on your brow—for all men to see—I'll put the mark of shame—soon, by God's help, with my sword! Now—with my—

[*He strikes* ERNESTO *a stinging blow in the face.* ERNESTO *with a cry of horror recoils, steps backward slightly, raises himself to his full height, and makes a threatening step forward as if to return the blow.*

TEODORA

[*With a shriek.*

Ernesto!

[ERNESTO *stops instantly at the sound of her voice, clasps his hands together, and stands rigid as a statue.* JULIAN, *after striking* ERNESTO, *totters, and only keeps from falling to the floor by leaning against the piano.* SEVERO *and* BEAULIEU *rush to support him, as he reels to and fro.* TEODORA *crosses to* ERNESTO, *as if to keep him from following* JULIAN *as the others lead him from the room.*

SEVERO

[*To* JULIAN.

Come, come, Julian.

JULIAN

[*Faintly, looking at* TEODORA *and* ERNESTO *fixedly, and moving toward them.*

No—I've not done with them—

SEVERO

Leave them to me—leave them—

JULIAN

[*At the door, looking back.*

Together—as always—*together!*

[*Goes out, supported by* BEAULIEU.
[ERNESTO *stands dumb, motionless, gazing after* JULIAN, *as if actually stunned by the blow.*

TEODORA

[*Following him.*

Julian!

[*As she reaches the door,* SEVERO *turns.*

SEVERO

No!

[MERCEDES *and* PEPITO, *at a gesture*

from SEVERO, *go into* JULIAN'S *room.*

TEODORA, *beseechingly*

Surely, I may—

SEVERO, *vehemently*

No!

[*Closes the door in her face.*
[TEODORA *turns to* ERNESTO. *They stare at each other in silence for some seconds.*

TEODORA

It was the madness of fever—that blow—you must forgive Julian.

ERNESTO

I love him for it—it makes the rest so easy—Only, to go and leave you here, alone, with these pitiless—

TEODORA

Where are you going—what will you do?

ERNESTO

What is left me to do?

TEODORA, *affrighted*

You'll not—

ERNESTO

After that blow—*you* wouldn't have me live?

TEODORA

Kill yourself—

[*Tremulously.*

No! no!

[*With bitterness.*

No! Fate took one life because of me—and for nothing, nothing, nothing! It shall not have another.

[*With a commanding gesture.*

Here—you remain—under my eyes—until this horror ends!—Or—come—

[*Takes his hand.* ERNESTO *draws back.*

ERNESTO

Where?

TEODORA

To Julian.—*Now*, I'll take you to him—

ERNESTO, *proudly*

No!

TEODORA

With me—yes—In the clear light that comes with the end to guide every soul to its Maker, he will see the truth—and tell us so.

[ERNESTO *shakes his head.*

TEODORA

He *must* tell us.

[*She leads* ERNESTO, *who is reluctant, toward* JULIAN'S *room. Before they reach the door, it opens.*

SEVERO

[*At the threshold.*

Where are you going?

TEODORA

[*Drawing slightly back.*

To Julian.

SEVERO

You shall not.

TEODORA

Don Severo!—It is my right.

SEVERO

[*In measured tones.*

You have no more right in this house.

TEODORA

But you will let me see—my husband.

SEVERO, *grimly*

Oh, yes.

[*Holds open the door.*

You may see what you have done.

[TEODORA *passes him, stands a long time, gazing into the room; then, with a cry of anguish, staggers back, and falls on her knees, with her head buried in her arms.*

SEVERO

[*Standing over her.*

And—now—out with you!

[*Calls.*

Pepito!

PEPITO

[*Entering with* MERCEDES.

Yes, father—

SEVERO

You have my orders.

PEPITO

But, father—

SEVERO

Show this woman the door.

[PEPITO *hesitates.*

SEVERO

[*In louder tones.*

You hear me?

PEPITO

[*Tremulously, appealing to* MERCEDES.

But my mother would rather—

SEVERO

Since *you* won't—then the servants!

[*Crosses to the hall.*

MERCEDES

[*Commandingly, so that he stops quickly.*

Severo!—Donna Teodora was Julian's wife!

SEVERO

Oh, you want *ceremony* for this creature. Well, then, since you prefer, *I* shall—

[*Approaches* TEODORA.

[*From the moment that* ERNESTO *realizes the meaning of* TEODORA'S *cry, as she turns from* JULIAN'S *door, he stands dumb, motionless, staring vacantly into space, as if stunned into a graven image.—Now, as* SEVERO *advances to her, he fairly leaps between them, with arms uplifted, and in a quivering frenzy of wrath.*

ERNESTO

[*In tones of mingled rage and tears.*

If you dare! If you *dare!*—So much as touch this woman—since death itself cannot shame you—nor stop you.—You've had your way—your dull, stupid, cruel, pitiless way.—In your ignorance, your folly, your vileness, you dared dishonour Julian's wife—you shall not dishonour mine. Brave, noble gentleman though he was, he could not guard *his* wife from you. You shall see how I can guard *mine!*

SEVERO

[*Turning triumphantly to* MERCEDES.

'Mine'—you heard? 'Mine'! They've done with lies, now.

ERNESTO

Because, now, *now*, for the first time, it is the *truth!* And wonder of it all, your *lies* have made it truth. *Now*, but never till now. . . . If love had burned its way into my heart I'd have strangled it—or strangled myself—before a word passed my lips. I'd have plucked out my eyes before one gleam should betray me. Not even to myself—in the loneliness of night—would I have owned to such disloyalty.—And so it would have gone to the end of life—to the end of time—so that we could face him—we two—through all eternity—*unflinching*, though our very hearts *shrivelled* with passion.

[*Turning to* TEODORA, *with arms outstretched.*

Come, Teodora.

[*She shrinks back—as if frightened—toward* MERCEDES.

Come—you are mine, now, Teo, mine! *mine!!*

SEVERO

Ah, now we have the truth! It is as we said—*just* as we said.

ERNESTO

[*With exultation that grows steadily from the start to the finish of his speech, so that at the end it thrills with tones of defiance and victory.*

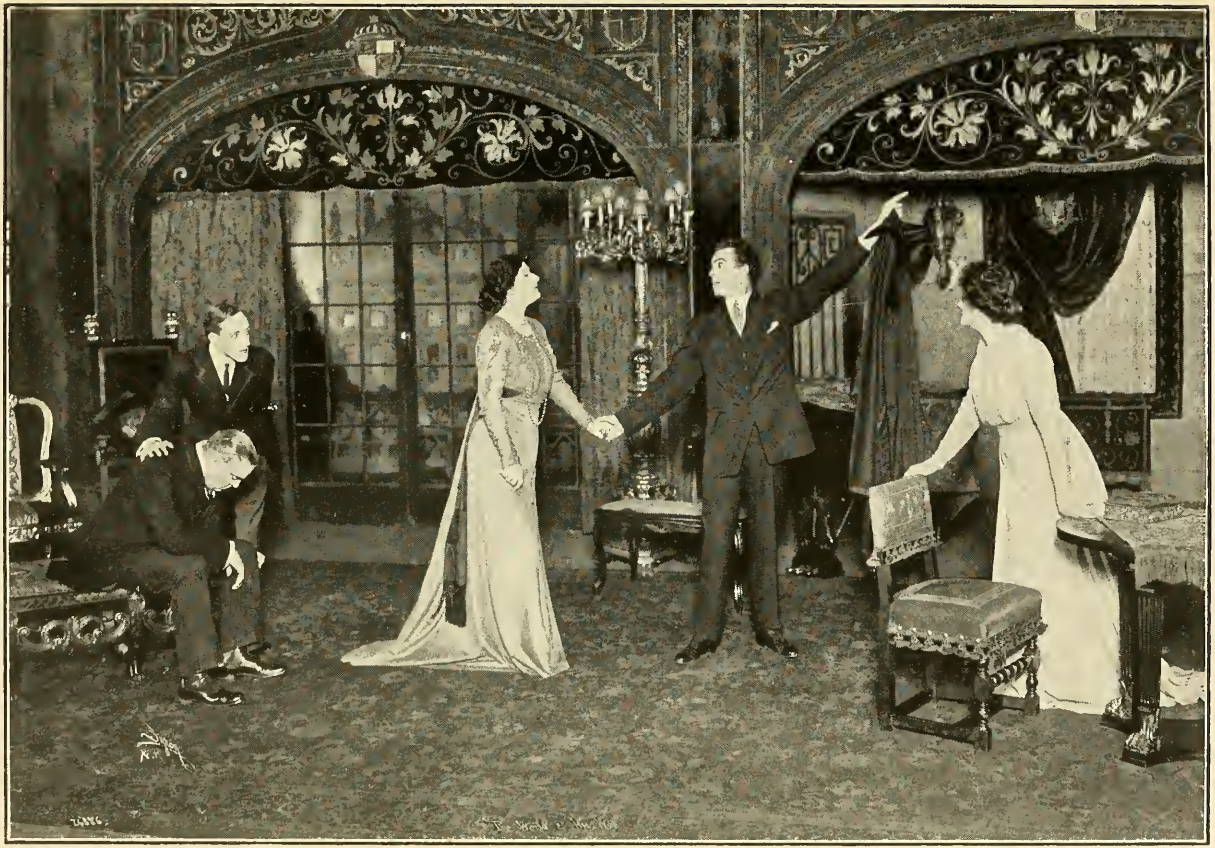
Yes, now it is as you *would* have it!—Never until this moment was there thought of love between us. This woman's soul was pure as the sunbeams—my heart as clear as the skies. Teodora loved none but Julian. I was his loyal friend, ready to serve him to the death.

[*With uplifted hand.*

And that I swear to the Great Judge before whom Julian has gone to arraign her and me. So, too, it would have been to the end. But now! Now we are as you would have us—conscious of guilt, bold in shame. The life warmth fled from the slain Julian kindled in our hearts the flames of an accursed passion.—

[*Rushes to the balcony and flings the doors wide open.*

Go cry it from the windows and the house-tops,



"Now we are as you would have us!"

to all your neighbours, you and your kind! Say to them: 'Yes, we were right—they *are* lovers, Teodora and Ernesto—they confess it, without blame or blush!' And when they ask you who has wrought this—this *marvel* and infamy, you may answer them: "You have done it—and I—and that man there—and *that* one—and that one! all of us, everywhere! We mixed the subtle poison and scattered it to the winds, so these two might breathe it in, to stifle conscience and drug the soul.' Yes, the triumph is *yours*—and you've done your hellish work well! Come, Teodora,

[*Taking her in his arms.*

they have given you to me—my sacred love—my eternal life. Henceforth you rest in *my* arms—that strain to clasp you.—They've willed it so—they've willed it so—and let all righteous Heaven judge between them and us!

[*The last sentence is uttered in tones of thunderous defiance, as* ERNESTO *and* TEODORA *are making their way to the door.*

CURTAIN

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